



BY THE AUTHOR OF "TOO CLEVER BY HALF"

# MY FRIEND'S WIFE

OR

## YORK YOU'RE WANTED.

BY JOHN LANG.



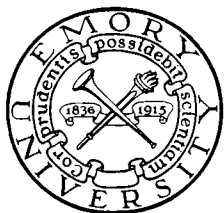
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# MY FRIEND'S WIFE.



## CHAPTER I.

I AM a lieutenant in one of Her Majesty's regiments of foot, and have just returned to England after a long service in India. I have nothing to tell about the mutiny or the battles in which I was engaged. Nor have I a grievance to make public, either on my own behalf, or on that of any one else. I am not disappointed or annoyed at what has been done or undone, with respect to prize money ; I do not grumble at the amount of compensation I am to receive for the loss of my "little all" in Meerut. I have not the faintest animosity towards the general officer who commanded the force to which I was attached, for not provisionally investing me with the Victoria Cross. I may say, indeed, that when I embarked on board the steamer at Calcutta, I was a perfectly contented, if not a happy man. Notwithstanding all that I had gone through, I was in excellent health ; and the prospect of seeing my family and friends again in the course of a few weeks imparted a cheerfulness to my temper, and an elasticity to my spirits.

There was nothing that lay in my power that I would not have done for anybody. My belief is, that I would have lent a fellow passenger, of doubtful character and loose principles, half the contents of my purse, on his verbal promise to repay me at Southampton. Though not regarded in my regiment (or elsewhere that I know of) as "a clever fellow," I have always been regarded as "a very good-natured fellow." There is a proverb that "a good-natured fellow is the nick-name for a fool;" and during my passage to England I was frequently struck with the truth of that old saw.

On the morning of my departure from Calcutta, I met on the deck of the steamer, a Mr. Bink, of the Bengal Civil Service—a gentleman whose acquaintance I had made four or five years previously in one of the stations in the upper provinces of India. He was then the magistrate and collector of the district. During a period of seventeen months, I twice dined and once took tiffin at Bink's house. He was not a hospitable man, by any means; but had the repute of being a great miser, and as rich as a Jew—"lots of company's paper—lots of shares in the Agra and Oriental Banks, and the Bank of Bengal, and lots of bungalows in Agra, and Cawnpore, and other stations." Bink was a married man, and his wife a very pretty little woman, though the expression of her countenance was rather sour, if I may use that word. It was said that she had a very bad temper; but she never, of course, exhibited it towards her guests or visitors, though I did see her once give Bink a look, at a dinner party, which seemed to go through and through him. Bink

certainly was not a prepossessing or loveable man. His constant theme was money, or the value of this or that chattel. The only variation was when he held forth on the duties of his office, his cutcherry (court), and the chances he had of speedy promotion to a judgeship. Though a variation, this was anything but a relief. With the exception of not giving her as many rupees as she might ask for, Bink was the most obedient husband I ever knew. He was, in fact, a perfect slave to his wife's wishes. He would send a sowar (a horseman in pay of the government) any distance to procure for her a few mangos of superior quality, or a couple of seers of ice. At a ball, he would run out and order the carriage to be brought up the very instant she gave him a look and a nod. It mattered not with whom he might be talking at the time, he did not stay to finish his sentence, or come back to do so. Rumour had it that Mrs. Bink had married against her own will ; but, on the husband's side, there could not be the least doubt of the ardour of the attachment. The post-nuptial and lover-like attentions of Bink towards his "own beloved Laura," as he called her in company, were generally attributed to a fear that if he relaxed, in the least degree, she would insist on spending the summer at that charming, but dangerous place, Mussoorie, whilst he was toiling in the plains. Mrs. Bink was not a flirt exactly ; but it was evident to myself and others who had led her to dinner and supper tables, that she liked exceedingly to be admired. And that she was fond of listening to compliments was as palpable as possible, for whenever one was paid her, she invariably said, "What?"

—in order that you might repeat it. If the truth must be told—if, in vulgar parlance, a clean breast must be made of it—be it known that I was one of Mrs. Bink's most enthusiastic admirers, *and she knew it*. Whenever my eyes met her lovely hazel orbs, my heart fluttered like a little bird in a schoolboy's hand; and when she opened her pretty little red lips, showed her white teeth, and spoke to me, the sound of her voice quite enraptured me. Had she been a widow, I would have "proposed" to her—for she was a woman of good birth, and her manners were extremely ladylike and gentle with all (save Bink, with whom she was brusque and off-handed). As for Bink, I *hated* him. It may have been because of the tender thoughts and feelings I entertained for his wife. Never would I have asked him so often to dine with me at our mess, had it not been in the hope—a vain and forlorn hope (alas!)—that he would invite me in return to his board, where I should see and hear his wife, and, after dinner, listen to her songs. She did not sing particularly well; but I would rather have listened to her than to Grisi or Jenny Lind. When the regiment to which I belonged was moved from the station of which Bink was the magistrate, I thought my heart would break when I called to say "farewell" to the lady. For days and days, on the line of march, I was the most miserable of mortals. I thought of her continually while awake, and when asleep I dreamt of her. Sinful as it was, no doubt, I loved her to distraction. "What if her temper be vile," I would say to myself, "would not the gratifying of her every whim and caprice constitute the chief charm

of my existence?" It was a long time before I recovered the shock I experienced at parting with Mrs. Bink. And when I saw her husband on the deck of the steamer, on the morning of my embarkation at Calcutta, the old time again stole over me, and my heart, which an absence of five years and hopelessness had stilled, commenced its palpitations and flutterings afresh.

"What!" I exclaimed, on beholding Bink, whom I seized by both hands, shaking them with hypocritical friendliness, "are *you* going home?"

"No," he replied, with a mournful shake of the head. "But my beloved wife and three children are. I could not, you see, my dear York (such is my name, reader), give up my judge's pay, 2,500 rupees a month, besides the risk of losing a commissionership which will soon be vacant—for Saverty is very shaky, and the doctors say if he does not go on furlough, he will soon go to his long home—and I've got the promise of the acting appointment when either event may happen."

"I see," said I, my heart bounding with delight, that *he* would not be on board the ship; for, although I do not think he was jealous of his wife, still Bink never allowed her to converse with a man for long, without coming up and joining in the discourse.

"Any little attention you can show to my wife and children on the passage, my dear York, I am sure you *will* show them," said Bink.

"You may rest satisfied upon that head, my dear Bink," I replied. "As old friends in the upper provinces, Mrs. Bink may command my services on all occasions

with as much confidence as though I were her own brother."

"Thanks, my dear York. She is now in her cabin, making various little arrangements. She will not appear on deck again until our parting is over, and the vessel is at anchor at Kedgeree for the night. But there is no need of an introduction. I will tell my wife what you have been kind enough to say." And, leaving me, Bink went to Mrs. Bink's cabin. Presently, the bell rang. It was a warning that in five minutes the warps would be cast off, and that those who were not passengers were expected to leave the vessel immediately. Then came hasty advices, and a rush for the platform which connected the ship with the shore. Bink was in the crowd. He shook me hurriedly by the hand and said, "God bless you, York! a speedy and a pleasant passage!" In another minute I saw him standing on the bank, and was very happy indeed to see him there.

Round went, gradually, the steamer's head. The paddles began to revolve slowly. "Half speed!" was the pilot's command, and in a few minutes Garden Reach receded from our sight. I would not at that moment have exchanged places with any king or kaiser in Europe! Mrs. Bink and myself were in the same barque, and, with the sanction of her husband, she was under my protection! Let not the reader suppose that I ever thought of abusing the sacred character of my trust. I was much too romantically in love for that. "To linger near her, to see and hear her, was all that I hoped," and hurried to the air of Weber's last waltz.

To make sure of having my "charge"—that is to say, Mrs. Bink—(and I was not a little proud of the office) near me, I went into the saloon, and said to the head steward, in rather a pompous manner, perhaps: "Look here, Mr. Andrews! Mrs. Bink, a lady who is the wife of a gentleman of high standing in the civil service, is going home in the ship."

"I know, sir," replied Mr. Andrews; "cabin 27—over there."

"Very well. They are old friends of mine, and I have promised Mr. Bink that I will show his wife every attention during the passage."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, Mr. Andrews, will you have the kindness to have these two cards of mine" (I drew them forth from their case) "tied to two chairs, or benches rather, in order that our places may be secured?"

"It is already done, sir. Mr. Bink has spoken to me, and mentioned your name. Lieutenant York, I believe?"

"Yes."

"All right, sir. There are your places. Mrs. Bink sits on the right of the Admiralty agent, and you on his left, sir."

"But I wish to sit *next* to Mrs. Bink."

"That cannot be done now, sir, unless you come to some private arrangement with the parties who have taken the other places."

"Who are they?"

"Well, sir, there is an elderly lady—a Mrs. Colonel



Somebody—will sit next to Mrs. Bink on the right. She took the place herself, and I don't *think* she'd give it up."

"Then, who has the place *opposite* to Mrs. Bink?"

"A gentleman, sir; but he is not likely to move."

"Why not?"

"His wife sits on his right, and her sister on his left."

"Confound it!"

"Your only chance, sir, is to speak to the Admiralty agent. *He* might change places with you."

"Who is the Admiralty agent?"

"A lieutenant in the Royal Navy, sir. His name is Bloomfield."

"Where is he?"

"I saw him on the quarter-deck just now, sir, reading a newspaper. You will easily find him. He wears a blue frock-coat, with large anchor and crown buttons, and a blue cap with a gold band, and the crown in the front. He is a very affable old gentleman, a great favourite with all the passengers, male and female, and will do anything to oblige anybody, except when he is crusty, and then he only bullies the captain and officers of the ship, by making them turn up his mail-boxes for him to count and inspect them."

I hastened to the deck, looked round, and there saw the old lieutenant seated in an easy chair. He was not reading. The newspaper was lying across his knees, and he was musing. He was a very good-looking old gentleman, with grey hair and very black eyes, which had a humorous, quick, and intelligent expression in them. I

saluted the old lieutenant by raising my hat, and saying, "Good morning, sir." He returned my salute, and at once entered into conversation.

"Fine day, is it not?" he began.

"Very, sir," I replied. -

"And a cool breeze."

"Very pleasant, indeed. This is a remarkably fine ship, sir."

"Oh, yes, well enough for the purpose of a floating hotel. But look at that ratlin—there, sir, in the mizen rigging!"

"What's the matter with it, sir?"

"Don't you see there are two strands gone? If that fellow they call a serang, and who does duty as the boatswain on board here, had left a ratlin like that when I commanded the 'Jasper,' a ten gun brig, I'd have disrated him, to a moral. And just look at that deck! They call that 'paying the seams of a deck!' I'd have paid the fellow that 'payed' it off in his own coin—a ladleful of hot pitch on his pelt. And look here: they have been sacrilegiously using a dumb-scraper where only the holy-stone ought to have been! But, never mind. Here I am, after six-and-thirty years' service afloat, engaged in cutting out expeditions, first as a middy, then as a mate, then as a third lieutenant, then as a second lieutenant, then as a first lieutenant of a frigate, and then as a lieutenant commanding in different parts of the world—here I am on a consolidated allowance of about £300 a year, and the run of my teeth in the saloon. And then look at the bother and the responsibility! If I lose one of those

boxes, holding the mails, or if one of them is missing, it is all up with me—out I go! No explanation! It is enough to make a man break his heart, positively!”

“It is a sad state of affairs, sir,” I conceded, “and it ought to be brought before the British public in the columns of the *Times*.”

“So it ought. But what’s the use of writing letters?

‘Those who read ’em, never heed ’em;  
Those who do not, never see’d ’em.’”

“Very true, sir.”

“What’s the time? Near eight bells?”

“It wants twenty minutes to twelve, sir.”

“I wish it was nearer, for I am thirsty. How are you off for books?”

“I am very well supplied, sir.”

“Lots of novels?”

“An abundance; all Bulwer’s, Disraeli’s, Marryatt’s, &c.”

“Ah! I am glad to hear it. I shall take the liberty of indenting on you, whenever I happen to feel dull.”

“The contents of my cabin will be at all times at your disposal, sir.”

“Upon my word, you are very kind, sir.”

Here I lowered my voice, and said:—

“Lieutenant Bloomfield, I want you to do me a favour.”

“Anything in my power, sir,” he replied.

I then mentioned to the Lieutenant what I desired. He looked me full in the face, shut his sinister eye, and

contemplated me with the dexter one, for at least a quarter of a minute, before he spoke.

"Is she young?" was his first question.

"Not very," I replied.

"Pretty?"

"Not particularly."

"Agreeable?"

"Decidedly not."

"Then why the deuce are you so anxious to sit near her?"

"Because I have promised her husband that."

"Oh!" he groaned; and then, with a smile, said:—"I'll look at her first, before I give you a decided answer. Men frequently see women with very different eyes. What you may not think pretty, I may think beautiful. What may not seem agreeable to you, I may regard as charming. The whole of my affections, sir, ever since I was fifteen, have been divided between the service and the sex. By the side of a pretty and conversationable lady I always feel in heaven. Oh, no! I cannot promise, but I'll see about it, as the independent voter always says to the candidate, on the first time of asking. If I don't like her as soon as I see her, I shall say to you, 'I beg your pardon, sir;' but if I *do* happen to approve of her, I shall take out my white lawn pocket-handkerchief, and give a subdued cough, which you will, I trust, take as a signal that you are to pass to my left. At the West Indies, when I commanded the 'Jasper,' shortly after Tom Baker left the ——." (The old lieutenant told me a long story, which was not half over when the

bell eight was struck ; but what it was all about I cannot say. My mind was too much disturbed to admit of my listening ; and even the grins that I forced whenever *he* grinned were very melancholy ones, I suspect.)

As I was descending the staircase that led to the saloon, I encountered an old acquaintance. It was no other than Mrs. Bink's ayah. She instantly recognised me, and made a salaam. She had then in charge Mrs. Bink's two elder children, Georgina and Alfred, whom she represented as very mischievous and naughty. Georgina was about six and a half years of age, and Alfred about four and a half ; both of them were fearfully precocious, and (in the Hindostani language) abusive and insolent to the last degree. When I asked them if they remembered me (which, of course, they did not), they simply replied, "*Jehanum ko jao*," which signifies, "Go to the realms below." The ayah told me that Bink Sahib was a very mean man ; that he would not allow his wife a second servant, though she represented to him that, as the youngest child was only eleven months old, and unable to walk, herself and the ayah would scarcely be competent to take care of them on the voyage. To all of this I responded, very magnanimously, "*Kooch perwar nahin, ayah ! Mem Sahib ka nowkree me, hum toomara shureek howengee*."—"Never mind, ayah ! In the lady's service I will be your partner.")

## CHAPTER II.

MRS. BINK did not appear at luncheon nor at dinner on the first day. But at six o'clock she came upon the deck, and took a seat near some ladies who were drinking tea. It would be impossible for me to describe my emotion when I took in mine the little hand she extended to me. It was several minutes before I found the wonted use of my tongue. That Mrs. Bink was glad to see me I plainly perceived. We had naturally a great deal to talk about, with reference to old times, and friends whom we knew in common, both ladies and gentlemen; and until nine, at which hour the ladies retired to their cabins, I monopolised the conversation of Mrs. Bink, and then went forward to join the smokers, amongst whom was the old lieutenant.

"I have looked at her," said that officer to me, "and have spoken a few words to her, and I am now prepared to give you an answer."

"In the affirmative, I hope," I replied.

"No, my good sir—in the negative. She is by far the prettiest woman on board, and I would rather give you up my cabin than the privilege of sitting next to her."

This was very provoking; but the lieutenant argued

his point in such a way that it was impossible to be offended with him.

The next morning, at seven o'clock, I might have been seen carrying about Mrs. Bink's baby, while the ayah was assisting its mother in dressing Alfred and Georgina. Several of the passengers (half jestingly) remarked what an excellent nurse I made. At a quarter to eight the ayah came for "baby," and left Georgina and Alfred in my care. It was no easy matter to keep near both of them, for Alfred would run to the fore part of the deck, while Georgina insisted on going aft and staring at the man at the wheel. Both were as naughty and as self-willed as are the majority of children brought up in India, and tended by slaves for servants. One of the mildest of Alfred's threats (in Hindustanee) was to break every bone in my body, and give it to the crows to eat; while Georgina, whenever I requested her to be quiet, invariably said, "*Choop! Hum toomara nâk, kat-dalega!*" ("Hold your tongue! I will cut your nose off!") But what recked I of their abuse? I, who loved and kissed them for their mother's sake! Numberless were the pleasantries I had to endure from the old lieutenant and others, while keeping out of danger these mercurial little beings, who flew about the deck in opposite directions like two little birds, delighting, seemingly, in the trouble they gave me. At eight, all the children on board (some fifty of them) breakfasted; and at nine, the adults. Mrs. Bink came forth from her cabin looking lovely, and dressed, as she always was, in exquisite taste, but not expensively. Although the old lieutenant, like a rolling

river, divided us, I still contrived to talk to Mrs. Bink across him. He sat as erect as possible, while we leant forward. He very soon, however, took occasion to put an end to this confab. Suddenly he exclaimed, "Hark! the scream of a child! Gone down the fore-hatchway head first, I imagine!"

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Bink. "Georgina or Alfred, perhaps? *Do*, Mr. York, ascertain!"

I hurried to obey her will, rushed upon deck, and found the pair of naughty ones in mischief, but perfectly safe, under the care of the ayah, who appeared in despair. I was absent for at least five minutes, and then returned to make my report to the anxious mother.

"Whose child was it?" said the old lieutenant, with an expression of countenance which would have been aggravating had it not been so comical.

"No on's," I replied. "All the children are out of harm's way. I did not hear any shriek. Did you, Mrs. Bink?"

"No," she replied.

"Then you did not hear that, perhaps?" said the lieutenant, lifting up his forefinger. Again Mrs. Bink exclaimed, "Dear me!" And again, to calm her fears, and prevent her leaving the table, I ran on deck, and ascertained that the lieutenant's alarm was a false one—as false as he knew it to be.

"I am very much obliged to you, Mr. York," said the lady; "but I am afraid your breakfast is cold."

"Pray don't mention it," I replied. "You know that you are at all times to command my services."



"I never knew a man—especially an unmarried man—so fond of children in all my life," said the lieutenant. "I would trust him with half a dozen of the little dears." Then, looking me full in the face, smiling, and sipping his coffee, he remarked, "I would, upon my word. I wish I was your age, and as agile, I'd offer to assist you in what seems, as far as you are concerned, a perfect labour of love." Then, turning to Mrs. Bink, he began a long story, to which she listened with great interest, but of which I can only remember the beginning, namely:—"When I was in command of the 'Jasper,' on the South American station, we had a visit from a gentleman and his wife, who were desirous of looking over the 'Jasper,' as she was the best-kept craft that ever dropped anchor in the harbour of Rio. The gentleman held a civil appointment—was a civilian in fact of very high standing. They had two children—the eldest a girl of between six and seven, the youngest a boy between four and five. These children accompanied their parents when they came to visit the 'Jasper.' Well, madam,—&c. &c. &c."

Breakfast over, Mrs. Bink brought from her cabin a little basket filled with Berlin wools, a frame, and a pattern. I escorted her to the deck, and saw her to her easy chair, which was under the awning, and near the mizen mast. I took a seat on a camp stool, on her left, and, withdrawing from my pocket a novel, began to read the opening chapter, while Mrs. Bink commenced her embroidery work. I had not got through the first paragraph, however, before Alfred came rushing to his mamma, crying, and complaining that Georgina had beaten

him. He was speedily followed by his sister, who denied the truth of his statement, and wept—not bitterly—but with a good imitation thereof. It took at least ten minutes to pacify and reconcile these unruly and pugnacious children, and then I resumed my reading and Mrs. Bink her worsted work. But alas! the interruption, on the children's part, was soon repeated; and, although (heaven forgive my hypocrisy!) I employed, to calm them, the most endearing expressions, such as, "darling Alfred," "darling Georgina," "pet," "lambkin," &c., I was inspired with a hatred for them such as I cannot express, and inward feelings which I dare not openly avow. The children, for a second time, were pacified and reconciled to each other, and, as they had begun to play with other children, I hoped they would be quiet for an hour at least. I had not, however, read more than thirty lines, when the ayah, holding "baby" on her hip, approached, and restored "the pleasing burden to its mother's arms." Mrs. Bink rose and retired to her cabin, followed by the ayah. "You will keep an eye on Alfred and Georgina?" she said to me. "You may be sure of that," I replied. But Mrs. Bink was scarcely out of sight when a fellow-passenger—Captain Le Trott, of the Artillery—came up, and asked me to lend him Bulwer's "Zanoni." I told him I would bring it to him from my cabin if he would mount guard over the two children during my absence. He promised that he would do so, and down I rushed for the volume he required. I had not been absent for more than six minutes; but when I came back there was a fearful hubbub on the quarter deck.

There was Mrs. Bink as pale as death, Georgina with her silk dress torn almost to pieces, and Alfred with a bump on his forehead as large as a pigeon's egg. It appeared that Georgina had ran foreward, as soon as I left her, and having stood with her back to the sheep pen, had been seized by the dress, and in her fright and hurry to get away, had left the greater part of her garment behind her; that while Captain Le Trott was rushing to Georgina's rescue, Alfred must needs run behind the captain's cabin, on the after part of the deck, entangle himself in the wheel ropes, and get the "spiller" which so much disfigured him and alarmed his mother. As for Captain Le Trott, as soon as the double accident had happened, and Mrs. Bink, in a state of great excitement, appeared, he decamped, leaving me to bear the brunt of the whole proceeding. Mrs. Bink was exceedingly wroth, and giving me a look which harrowed my very soul, she said, "Really, Mr. York, you must have done this on purpose!" In vain did I attempt to explain. She simply replied to all my protestations, "Oh, nonsense!"

No one seemed to sympathise with me. Several mothers, who had children on board, respectively cried, "Shame!" "Never heard of such a thing in my life." "If I were Mrs. Bink I would never speak to that man again!" while Lieutenant Bloomfield, who came up, and winked privately to me, thus addressed Mrs. Bink: "My dear madam, the blow is not very serious, but it might have been fatal; and though this beautiful dress is a total wreck, still let us be thankful to a merciful Providence that the dear little missy's legs have not been bitten. The bite of a sheep is something awful. When I was in

command of the 'Jasper,' we were once lying in Table Bay, Cape of Good Hope. The Cape sheep, you know, have tails that weigh from ten to twenty pounds. One day a dear and beautiful little girl—just such a darling as little missy—neglected by her nurse——" (Here I ran down into my cabin, threw myself upon my couch, groaned heavily, and endeavoured to console myself by reading "Peter Simple." At twelve o'clock, one of the stewards looked into my cabin, and informed me that luncheon was on table. Determined not to appear again that day, I requested him to bring me some biscuit, a piece of cheese, and a glass of ale—not that I had any appetite for food, by the way. When dinner time came—four o'clock—I was again visited by the same steward. I told him I did not feel very well, and requested him to bring me a little roast duck, mashed potatoes, and some sherry and water. When these matters were brought into my cabin on a tray, I desired the steward to place them on a portmanteau. I then read on, till I fell asleep. At a quarter to six I was awakened by a tapping at the cabin door. I called aloud,

"Who is there?"

"It is I, sahib," cried Mrs. Bink's ayah.

"What do you want?" I demanded.

"Here is a letter from the mem sahib."

I sprang up, opened the door, took the missive from her hand, and read as follows:—

"Dear Mr. York,—I am very sorry if, in my fright and anxiety, I spoke to you harshly this forenoon. Need I say that nothing would occasion me greater pain than to reflect that I had wounded your feelings? Believe me, ever sincerely yours,

LAURA BINK."

I brushed my hair, put on an overcoat—for the evening was rather chilly—and went into the saloon, where the ayah told me Mrs. Bink was sitting. I found her alone, on one of the sofas which were “dead aft” and athwart ships. I offered her my hand, which she took, and pressed gently. Mutual apologies then passed, and presently we walked on the deck, and saw the full moon rise from the ocean. Thank heaven! Alfred and Georgina, tired out with their exertions during the day, had gone to rest, and “baby” was fast asleep in the arms of the ayah. On the whole, I was rather glad that the accident had happened to the children in the morning, inasmuch as it afforded me an opportunity of telling Mrs. Bink, in the warmest terms, how very much I regarded her and all belonging to her. It was a lovely night, and until nine o’clock came and the ladies retired, I was, perhaps, the happiest man on board the steamer, and went into the saloon for “grog” with the lightest heart imaginable. Lieutenant Bloomfield and Captain Le Trott came and sat near me. The former was very funny and facetious, and the latter convulsed with laughter, in which I was compelled to join.

“I said as much as I could for you, at dinner time,” said Lieutenant Bloomfield. “I told her you were young, and perhaps thoughtless, though very much attached to the little dears; that what had happened would no doubt be a lesson to you, and that in the future—that is to say, for the remainder of the passage—you would be more careful. You will have a treat, sir, long before we arrive at Suez. Two such brats I never encountered

as those two children of hers. That boy stole a raw egg out of the pantry, and deposited it in my coat pocket, and, when I went to take my place at the dinner table, I sat upon it. The girl amused herself by taking my cap on deck, and, with a pair of scissors, snipped the crown off, and gave it to the baby for a plaything. If I had my will of them, I'd hang them at the foreyard arm—the mischievous little brutes. But I had to take the annoyance all in good part, and when she expressed her sorrow, I came out with that humbugging and hacknied speech, which all mothers like to hear on such occasions—‘My dear madam, they are children. Children will be children. We were children ourselves once.’ Let us go forward and smoke. After that I shall turn in.”

## CHAPTER III.

THE next morning I had "baby" till Alfred and Georgina were dressed, and then Alfred and Georgina till they were called to breakfast. Mrs. Bink, looking through the Venetian at me, said, with a pretty smile, "I know you will take great care of them, Mr. York." The children wished to see my cabin, and I being quite ready to gratify them, said, "Come along!" Of this I repented me, not only a few minutes afterwards, but on several subsequent occasions, to which I shall have to allude.

Alfred took up and admired two wristband studs, which I had used for several years. (They were a present from my favourite sister.) He asked me to give him one; but upon my declining, and assigning my reasons for doing so, he flung them away on to the main deck. One I recovered, but the other, having fallen amongst the machinery near the mainshaft, was lost to me for ever. Whilst I was searching for the studs, Georgina was not a little busy inside the cabin. She had "mended" a lead pencil (taking care not to cut herself—for she moved the edge of the blade downwards, and from her, till it came in contact with the marble top of the wash-hand stand) with the only razor with which I could

shave comfortably. The razor, of course, was no longer of use. It was notched in five or six places. In addition to this she had broken the glass belonging to my dressing-case, and had overturned a bottle of Macassar oil upon a volume of Byron—a parting-gift from the wife of our colonel. I was exceedingly annoyed. But what could I say, or do? To reprove them would have been to incite them to abuse me; and I did not dare slap their naughty little hands. Nor did I mention their conduct to Mrs. Bink. But she came to hear of it very soon. Alfred and Georgina quarrelled about ten o'clock, and the former asked the latter, in his mother's hearing and mine—"Who broke Mr. York's looking-glass?" To which the latter responded, "Ah! but who threw away his gold buttons?" Mrs. Bink asked me if these statements were true. I was obliged to confess; but assured her (my falsehood may be forgiven) that I did not put any value on the destroyed property. To do her justice, however, she told the children that their conduct had been "highly improper," and that when she wrote to their papa, she would tell him how "wicked" they had been. During the whole of that day Mrs. Bink was extremely kind to me. She listened with great eagerness to all I said to her. If I asked her to take my arm and walk round the deck, she put down her work immediately. When the children were asleep she sang and played for me; and we finished the evening by a game of chess in a cozy corner of the saloon. By the way, I had the pleasure of sitting *next* to Mrs. Bink that day at dinner. The old lieutenant had been caught in one



of his own traps, or rather had punished himself more severely than he had punished others.

The Admiralty agent has entire charge of the mails, and he may at any time have them brought on deck and inspected, in order to ascertain that they are "safe." It has been already stated, by the head steward, Mr. Andrews, that Lieutenant Bloomfield, when crusty, gave a great deal of unnecessary trouble in this respect; and on the second day after our departure from Calcutta—the chief officer having contradicted him on some point—out came the old lieutenant from his cabin, at about half-past one o'clock, with his book in his left hand and a pencil in his right. Approaching the chief officer, he said:—

"Turn up my boxes, if you please, sir."

"Oh! they are all right. Take my word for it," said the chief officer.

"I'll take no man's word for it, sir. I'll see 'em and tally 'em, and satisfy myself as to their condition. You don't suppose it is a pleasure? No! it's a duty, and I'll discharge my duty. What am I here for? What am I paid for?"

"Don't bother to-day," said the chief officer; "we shall be at Madras on Monday morning, and then——"

"I know all about that. Say the word. Do you, or do you not intend to turn up my boxes? Do you intend, on behalf of the Peninsular and Oriental Company, to keep or violate the contract made and entered into with Her Majesty's Government? Shall I read you out the clause?"

"Oh, no! But see what an inconvenience it will be

to all the passengers to have those boxes laid along the deck?"

"What have I to do with that?"

"Besides, I have several things for the hands to do, and cannot spare a couple of officers just now. I want to send down that fore-top-sail, and bend a new one in its place, and——"

"It's no business of mine if your vessels are underhanded. Make your complaint in the proper quarter."

In vain the captain of the ship remonstrated; and the order was given, "Turn up the mail boxes." Up they came one by one—but very slowly—much to the annoyance and disgust of the old lieutenant, for it became evident to him that before the work was over the dinner would be upon the table; and so it was. Just as the last box reached the deck the bugle sounded. The wrath of the old lieutenant—who could not leave his charge—was immense. He then said, "I'll take it for granted they are all right. Turn 'em down again."

"Not till I have counted them with you," said the chief officer. "I have *my* duty to perform, and, after I have had my dinner, I'll perform it."

With these words he walked into the saloon, and took the seat which I had occupied on the preceding day. Ere long the steward came to the chief officer, plate in hand, and said, "Please, sir, Lieutenant Bloomfield wants some dinner sent out to him; says he should like some goose, sir."

"Ask him what part of the goose?"

The steward returned, and replied, "A leg, sir."

"Tell him the legs are gone."

The steward came back a second time, and said, "A wing, sir."

"Tell him the wings are gone."

Before the steward returned for the third time, not only was all the goose gone, but all the ducks and the fowls. Nothing was left but some joints of beef and mutton. Cutting off several very uninviting slices from a boiled leg, and picking out of a dish several of the worst boiled potatoes, the chief officer told the steward to "take him *that*;" and shaking a bottle of ale, to make it thick and muddy, he sent him "*that* also." Mrs. Bink, though amused at the proceeding, thought it a shame—knowing how the lieutenant enjoyed his dinner; but I was of opinion that it served him right, especially as he had played a trick upon *me*.

The third day brought me both grief and happiness. Before breakfast, Georgina and Alfred were with me as usual on the maindeck; but having turned my back for a moment to answer some question that was put to me, they contrived to get away. I looked for them in my cabin. They were not there. I asked several people, passengers and stewards, if they had seen them, and was answered, "No." That they were in mischief, I was certain; but *where*? That was the question.

Presently I heard the voice of an old Bengal Native Infantry colonel, who was coming home sick. His liver was gone, and he was as irritable and as testy as possible. The colonel was swearing vehemently. In another minute I saw Georgina and Alfred rushing from his

cabin. They had penetrated that apartment, and, finding the colonel asleep, had proceeded to do what they pleased. Georgina, with a pair of nail scissors, had cut off several locks from the colonel's black wig, and Alfred had emptied the contents of the shaving-water jug into the old officer's boots.

"I hope they have not done any serious harm, sir?" I said, putting my head near the cabin door.

"Harm! Yes, sir! great harm! If you can't keep your confounded brats in order, sir, you should treat 'em as wild beasts, and lock 'em up," was the answer I received.

"They are not *my* children, sir," I returned.

"Then why do you have them about you? I don't know whose they are, and I don't care; but if I ever catch them again in my cabin, I'll break their little necks. I shall speak to the captain about this."

The colonel kept his word, and thus the matter came to the ears of Mrs. Bink. She was "very much provoked" with the children's doings, and inclined to think that I was a good deal to blame for allowing them out of my sight, remarking, "They might, you know, have fallen down a hatchway, or that ladder which leads to the engine-room—bless them!"

"Very true," I replied, meekly.

Mrs. Bink then smiled graciously, winningly, upon me, and I did not care a fig for the old colonel's anger—and I told her so. She must have seen how completely I was infatuated with her, or she would not from that morning forward have treated me more like a servant

than a friend. She sent for me on all occasions when I was absent from her side, and there was not a moment when I might not expect to be interrupted. It mattered not whether I was playing at whist, ecarté, or vingt-un—reading, writing, or talking. The ayah would be sure to come to me, and say, "*Mem sahib salaam dea*," ("The mem sahib sends her salaam.") My name suggested a vulgar saying, which was continually bawled out to me by some person or other—"York! you're wanted!" Such is the vanity of some men, circumstanced as I was, that I would have suffered any amount of badinage and inconvenience rather than have removed the impression that got abroad in the ship, namely, that Mrs. Bink was in love with me! I knew she liked me; but as for love—bah! I have since become perfectly satisfied that she was the most selfish woman in the world. She loved herself, and she loved her children, but beyond that her heart was incapable of either affection or gratitude.

Several gentlemen on board the ship envied me the smiles of that pretty little woman, notwithstanding the annoyance they cost me with regard to her children. They little knew how hollow and how meaningless were those smiles!—that they were merely the price paid for my services, and regarded as an equivalent in the strictest sense of the word.

On the afternoon of the third day, I was embroiled in a very disagreeable quarrel, which set nearly every soul on board the ship against me. A young officer had taken charge of a little girl of some four years of age. She was coming to England with an ayah. The child was an

orphan. Her parents had both been massacred in the rebellion, and the child owed its life to the fidelity of a sirdar bearer. She was, of course, an object of great interest on board, and was taken a great deal of notice of. Alfred, on the afternoon in question, beat this little girl with a stick, and the officer who had charge of her, seized Alfred, laid him across his knees, and with his hand administered unto him a condign punishment, in the presence of every one, including Mrs. Bink, who was greatly offended, and sent for me. On hearing Mrs. Bink's statement, and entirely concurring with her, that *she* ought to have been called upon to punish Alfred, I sought the young officer, and demanded what he meant. He replied that he meant to repeat what he had done whenever the same provocation was offered. We came to high words, and never spoke again during the remainder of the passage.

On the following morning, at ten A.M., when we were going into the Madras Roads, Georgina took up an ivory paper-cutter, and threw it overboard. It was the property of a gentleman who had had it for many years. He seized Georgina's arm, gave her a shaking, and called her a "wicked little minx." Much as I sympathised with him, I was fool enough to avenge the imaginary wrongs of Georgina's mother. On this occasion, also, no one sided with me, but with "the other party."

The surf was running very high in the roads, and none of the passengers, save those whose destination was Madras, thought of landing. I know *I* did not—partly because I did not wish to leave Mrs. Bink's side, partly

because I had landed at Madras before, and partly because I did not want a wetting. Nevertheless I was destined to land, for Mrs. Bink wanted some hair-pins, and did not like, she said, to be under an obligation to any of the ladies on board. Would I go? "Of course! with the greatest pleasure in the world!" I said.

Drenched to the skin, I landed through the surf, and, hiring a palanquin, was taken to a shop, where I purchased three packets of hair-pins, and then came off to the ship again—in triumph, as I imagined.

"Really, Mr. York," said Mrs. Bink, on looking at my purchase, "if I had thought you would execute the commission in this way, I would have asked some other gentleman. Surely you must know that I could not use these common things. Pray take them back!"

I was actually fool enough to say that I would do so; but I was informed by the captain that if I did I should lose my passage, as the mails had left the shore, and as soon as they were on board the anchor would be weighed.

I had taken so severe a cold, in this hair-pin expedition, I became feverish and ill, and was confined to my cabin for two days. During that period I received several notes from Mrs. Bink, of which the following are specimens:—

#### No. 1.

"My dear Mr. York,—I am sorry to hear you are ill, but hope you will soon be better. Will you kindly send me the *second* volume of Moore's works? Yours sincerely, LAURA BINK. *Monday, 12th.*"

#### No. 2.

"My dear Mr. York,—The doctor tells me that you are not much better, and I regret extremely to hear it. Did you not tell me that you

had a superabundance of eau de Cologne? If so, will you send me a few bottles, for my stock is completely exhausted. Yours sincerely,  
LAURA BINK. *Monday Evening, 12th.*"

## No. 3.

"My dear Mr. York,—Glad to hear you are better. Mrs. Patterton, I see, is reading your 'Young Duke;'—no, not yours, Disraeli's. Would you mind writing a note, and asking her to let me have it for a few hours? I want to refer to a passage or two. Yours sincerely, LAURA BINK. *Tuesday Morning, 13th.*"

## No. 4.

"My dear Mr. York,—I am happy to hear from the ayah that you will be on deck to-morrow. Mr. Blossop has taken possession of your easy chair. Do, pray, tell him that my children have the *right* to occupy it in your absence. Georgina has told him so; but he takes no notice of her statement. Yours sincerely, LAURA BINK. *Tuesday Afternoon, 13th.*"

I ought to mention that during my indisposition Alfred and Georgina, possibly in gratitude for my attentions to them, paid several visits to my cabin door, where they sang several native songs—(*"Hilly Milly Punniar,"* "*Taza bu taza,"* "*So raho Baba. So*")—striking the Venetians with sticks by way of accompaniment to their somewhat discordant voices. It was useless for me to beg of them to go away, and I was determined not to let them in, for I was satisfied they would have drank some of the gargles for my sore throat, as well as the various febrifuges which the doctor had prescribed and dispensed.

It was not until we had sighted Ceylon that I made my appearance on deck. Mrs. Patterton, from whom "The Young Duke" had been taken, and never returned to her, looked very coldly at me—almost "cut" me. Mr. Blossop, who had been turned out of my easy chair,



scarcely returned my salute. The old liverless colonel shunned me. The officers with whom I had quarrelled took no notice of me. But what cared I for their displeasure, when Mrs. Bink received my hand so warmly, and expressed her happiness to see me again? I certainly did not appreciate the greeting that I received from Alfred and Georgina. The former possessed himself of my cigar-case, and picked the contents to pieces, while the latter carried off my lawn pocket-handkerchief, and thrust it into the goat's house, where it was immediately destroyed.

"Do you intend landing?" I asked Mrs. Bink.

"No," she replied; "but I am very anxious to have some of the children's linen washed. I wonder if it could be managed?"

"Not a doubt of it," I said. "Have it tied up in a bundle, and intrust it to me."

"You are very kind."

"There is no time to be lost."

"You shall have it at once."

I hailed a boat, and went on shore with the linen. At the Mansion House (the name of the chief hotel) I employed three men, and promised them a rupee each, in excess of what they demanded, if they would do the work remarkably well, and bring it to me at the hotel at half-past ten P.M. They performed their contract, as I thought, most conscientiously, and having counted all the articles, and compared them with the list, I set off for the ship. Mrs. Bink had retired, so I took the bundle into my own cabin, and kept it there until the next morning, at eight

o'clock (by which time we were far out at sea), when I sent it to Mrs. Bink, with my compliments. I fully expected to be loaded with thanks for my trouble; but it was otherwise. When I met Mrs. Bink at the breakfast-table, the first words she said to me were these :—

“You must have done it on purpose, Mr. York.”

“What?” I inquired.

“Brought back the linen in a worse condition than when you took it away, and half the articles beaten to pieces!”

This was said in the presence and hearing of Lieutenant Bloomfield, who, suspecting that I was an accomplice of the chief officer, in sending him out “that infamous dinner,” remarked, “My dear madam, what could you expect from a mad-cap like that? He was playing billiards, I hear, half the time he was on shore, and flirting with two pretty girls at the house of the commandant during the other half. The next time you want anything of that kind done, speak to *me*.”

“Thank you, Lieutenant Bloomfield,” said Mrs. Bink. “It was very foolish on my part, I confess.”

“When I was in command of the ‘Jasper,’ madam, I was once called upon to convey a new governor from the Cape to the Mauritius. His excellency’s family consisted of a wife and three daughters, besides two grandchildren. The washing had not come off, and——” I never could listen to the stories which the old lieutenant extemporised for every occasion, and, leaving the table, I went on deck. But what to behold? Alfred, with my full dress sword in his hand, hacking away at the chain

cable with all his might and main. He and his sister had been into my cabin, and taken out the weapon. Georgina was in possession of the scabbard, and was teasing the poultry with it. The blade, which I prized very highly—for an uncle of mine had worn it all through the Peninsular war—was completely spoilt, and the point broken off. I was ready to cry with rage, and at that moment cursed the hour I had ever seen Bink, his wife, or his little ones. No one seemed to sympathise with me. On the contrary, several passengers burst out into a loud laugh on observing my intense anger. I retired hastily to my cabin, threw myself down upon my couch, and determined not to “show” again for the remainder of the passage. But at twelve o’clock I received from Mrs. Bink the following letter :—

“My dear Mr. York,—It was, perhaps, very unreasonable on my part to be angry with you about the linen. But the truth is I was sadly put out when I came to look over it. I am much pained to hear that my children have broken your sword, for I know how highly a soldier prizes the blade he has worn in the wars. How the ayah came to allow them to be so wilful I cannot imagine. The point of the sword has been found. Don’t you think it could be mended? Baby is not very well, and I am anxious about her. I hope you have not taken the sulks? Believe me, ever sincerely yours,

“*Wednesday, 11th.*”

“LAURA BINK.

It was all over with me as soon as I read this. In less than five minutes I was seated by Mrs. Bink’s side, and holding, with the patience of a saint, a skein of silk, while Mrs. Bink wound it round a card. I felt that I very much resembled that skein of silk! But whilst I watched her pretty little fingers, I was not at all unhappy

in the reflection that I was her sacrifice ! What an idiot the old lieutenant, who stood near, and looked on, must have thought me !

That day, after dinner, I was involved in another unpleasantness. Children are not permitted to come into the saloon while the passengers are at meals ; and as soon as the dessert was on the table, Alfred and Georgina crept to the back of my chair, and looked at the almonds and raisins with wistful eyes. I gave them each half a handful, and they ran out, exultingly. When the ladies rose from their seats, and left the gentlemen to finish their wine, the purser came, took a seat near me, and, in the most good-natured manner imaginable, reminded me that the regulation concerning the children in the saloon was imperative, and he was bound to carry it out. Annoyed, as I still was, at the loss of my sword, and little disposed to brook any reproach, except from the lips of Mrs. Bink, I replied, pettishly, "Oh, nonsense !" The purser "hoped," very temperately, that I would not again break through the rule, to which I, very *intemperately*, responded, "I shall do so, whenever I please."

"No you shall not, sir," was the purser's firm rejoinder. "I will give my orders to the stewards not to admit *any* children in the saloon between the hour of four and half-past five ; and that they are to carry out to the deck, or put into their cabins, such as may be found trespassing." The purser, of course, was quite right, but ever afterwards a coolness existed between him and myself.

The next person with whom I quarrelled was the

captain, who was, very properly, extremely particular about the lights in the ladies' cabins being extinguished at ten o'clock, except in those cases where the doctor considered a light necessary, and then a safety lamp (of which the quarter-master had the key) was provided. Mrs. Bink, when she could not sleep, was fond of reading in bed, and, having wax lucifers and wax candles on board, she used to illumine her apartment occasionally after midnight. This was reported to the captain, who gave an order that on the next occasion the lady lighted a candle, and refused to extinguish it when the quarter-master, on going his rounds, requested her to do so—he, the quarter-master, was to enter her cabin and extinguish it with his own hand. And it so happened that this was actually done. Mrs. Bink, with her eyes full of tears, represented the case to me. I at once sought an interview with the captain in his cabin, and expatiated on the impropriety of such an order. The captain spoke about the danger of fire, the safety of the ship, and the lives of all on board—I, of the indecency of the proceeding. The captain shrugged his shoulders, whereupon I called him an arbitrary snob. I need scarcely say we never spoke again, or even saluted each other, although we had hitherto been on the very best of terms. I had also the misfortune to have a difference with the doctor, which led to a rupture of our previous friendly relations. Alfred had over-eaten himself, and became rather feverish. The doctor gave the boy an emetic, which did him, I dare say, a great deal of good, but made him excessively faint and weak. Mrs. Bink sent for the doctor four times during the night. He

attended, thought the child much better, and recommended that he should be allowed to sleep. Mrs. Bink, however, sent for the doctor a fifth time, and, the doctor being overcome with fatigue, sent a verbal message that he was ill, and refused to go. Of this Mrs. Bink complained to me most bitterly, and said, "It was most ungentlemanlike and heartless," requesting me to *speak* to the doctor. I did so. The doctor smiled, and said, "She is a silly, stupid woman, and I have no patience with her. She bores my life out, and is insolent into the bargain." This speech offended me vastly, and I suspect I expressed myself with great offensiveness, for the doctor never spoke to me again. I was sorry for this; for he had been remarkably kind to me during my indisposition. I had also a "turn up" with Mr. Andrews, the head steward, who most positively "declined to send mutton broth into Mrs. Bink's cabin at all hours of the day, insomuch as her children were not ill, and always ate heartily with the other children at regular meal times." This brute—(so I thought of him at the time)—had the audacity to tell me that he "did not believe Mrs. Bink wanted the broth for the *children*, or she would not order it to be well peppered, and indent for a glass of sherry at the same time." I could have knocked him down, and trampled on him—much as I liked the man's good-tempered face and respectful manner previous to this *contretemps*. Even with the head stewardess, for whom I had great regard, I had a few angry words, insomuch as she had refused to carry "baby," informing Mrs. Bink that she was "not a nurse, but on

board the ship to distribute her labours equally amongst the lady passengers !”

Mrs. Bink intimated to me that she “did not intend to give the head steward, head stewardess, or, in fact, any of the servants, the least gratuity, on her arrival at Suez ;” and she “hoped that I would follow her example.”

I replied, “Most certainly ! I will not give any of them a farthing !”

## CHAPTER IV.

MATTERS went on much in the way described in the last chapter till we arrived at Aden. Not a day passed without my having a dispute with some passenger or other, or some authority on board the vessel—not on my own account, for I have the good fortune to make friends, instead of enemies, in my journey through life. I know I was a great fool for my pains, but I could not help it. Once, and once only, did I beg of Mrs. Bink to bear with the inconveniences and trials attending a sea voyage; and then she cried so, and declared so earnestly she was *not* an unreasonable person, that I was very sorry for what I had done. The day before we sighted Aden there was a notice to the following effect posted up in the saloon:—“Passengers who require any luggage from the hold will be good enough to state the same to the chief officer, and describe the trunk or trunks, *before noon*, as at that time the hatches will be closed.” In addition to this, each passenger was, personally, asked the question by the purser. Mrs. Bink, when asked, said “No.” But at two P.M. she recollected that she *did* want one of her portmanteaus—No. 7—as it contained a pair of boots she wished to wear. The chief officer, to whom I spoke on



the subject, was the only officer on board with whom I had not come in collision. (He was a very gentleman-like man, and knew several members of my family. We were, indeed, distantly connected—his sister having married a first cousin of mine.)

“My dear sir! It is impossible!” was the reply of the chief officer. “And the request is out of all character and reason.”

“How so?” I demanded.

“In the first place, it would be a work of two hours, for four men and one officer. We should have to remove the whole mass of luggage which has been on deck to day. There was the notice, which everybody saw, and as that notice is stuck up twice every week, she can surely wait till the next time for her boots?”

“Ah!—but to oblige me.”

“I cannot, I tell you. If I were to do it for one, I must do it for another; and then there would be nothing but opening the hold and getting up boxes, from morning till night. Besides, I am now preparing to go into port! We shall be anchored at a little after seven to-morrow morning.”

“Could you not get at the trunk, *then*?”

“What! when we shall all be busy taking in about three hundred and fifty tons of coals?”

“Well—but there is a lady in the case.”

“Nothing of the kind.”

“What do you mean?”

“What I said. It is *not* a lady; but a pair of boots in the case; and for a pair of boots, under the circum-

stances, I would not do what you ask me if a maid of honour to the Queen wanted to wear them."

"Oh—but surely?"

"No! It is useless to importune me; for I will not do it. Excuse me for speaking so plainly, but you make as great a fool of that woman as she makes of you. And, mark my words, you will get no thanks for your pains. Since I have been in this service I have known numbers of cases precisely similar to yours—young unmarried men dancing attendance upon their friends' pretty wives and troublesome brats; and when, at the end of the passage, those pretty wives have met their relations, they have shaken off their lacqueys just as they would shake off the dust from their feet."

I thought this one of the most impertinent speeches that had ever been addressed to me, and, leaving the chief officer in high dudgeon, I returned to Mrs. Bink to tell her of my want of success. To my horror, she seemed to doubt my word, and several times put the question to me:—"Are you sure you spoke to him?"

"Do you think it possible," I replied, "that I could tell you a falsehood!"

"No. But—ah, well, I will ask Mr. Bloomfield to use his authority"—and, crossing the quarter deck, she made known her wishes to the old lieutenant, who at once addressed her as follows:—"My dear madam, it shall be done, but you must have a little patience. Had you spoken to me in the first instance, you would have had your box long before this. Breathe but the wish to me, with those lips, and I will make them bore holes in

the ship's timbers, and bring up for you some of the oysters that are sticking to the keel. When you want anything done always speak to me, in the first instance, remember." Mrs. Bink said she would do so in future, and then turning to me, and looking as triumphantly as though her box was actually on the deck, she exclaimed :—"There !" I could not help smiling, not at Mrs. Bink's simplicity in putting faith in the old lieutenant's promises, but at the very knowing wink and smile which that officer slyly gave me, previously to walking away towards the chief officer, with whom I saw him laughing heartily. When Mrs. Bink, at tea time, asked him "What about my trunk?" his reply was, "Patience, my dear madam—a little patience. It is coming. The order has been given, and the men, seven of them, are now hard at work, each with a lanthorn in his hand—for it is as dark as pitch in the hold. They may not be able to come to it before eleven o'clock ; but you shall have it sooner or later."

There was not a syllable of truth in these assertions ; but they pacified Mrs. Bink, as did several other promises which the lieutenant made her. One was, to have all the children's linen washed at Suez in three-quarters of an hour—"beautifully washed—as well got up, in fact, as though it had been in the hands of the laundress of the Empress of the French." He also promised her that, crossing the Desert, she should have a van to herself and family. He would see to all that, he said. I never knew a man so prolific in promises, and so deficient in his performances of them, as the old lieutenant. To some one or other—man, woman, or child—he was making pro-

mises from morning till night. He promised *me* at least one hundred things ; amongst others an autograph letter, written to him by Lord Nelson, thanking him for his advice on a particular occasion. Whenever he was reminded of his word, he had always ready an excuse for his delay or his default—an excuse so plausible, that it seemed most satisfactory even to the disappointed person. His excuse to Mrs. Bink for the non-production of the box was a very absurd one, but she received it most graciously, and thanked him over and over again for the trouble he had taken in the matter.

7.10 A.M.—“Let go the anchor!” shouted the captain. Let go it was, and out ran the chain cable, nine fathoms, I think. Here I must digress for a brief while, to say a few words in favour of the officers of the Peninsular and Oriental Company’s ships. Accidents, now and then, *do* occur ; but, generally speaking, the commanders are the most efficient officers imaginable. How they, days previously, hit the exact time of arrival at any port is something marvellous. So nearly do they name it, that lotteries are got up on board by the passengers as to the exact minute within the half-hour those words “Let go !” will be pronounced. Sometimes the tickets are a gold mohur each, making the pool worth £48. The excitement that prevails on these occasions is very amusing to witness. There is the sheet of foolscap on which is sketched the face of a clock, and on each line leading to the minutes is written the name of each ticket-holder. Every eye is intent on this, and every ear eager for the sound of the captain’s voice at the words “Let go !” The

umpire sticks a pin on the winning line, taking the word from a second umpire, standing by with a watch in his hand. Almost every one interested has his watch out, and consults it, anxiously. It occasionally happens that the pool is divided into two parts, the words "Let go!" being called out while the minute-hand is between two points. I once saw the pool (£48) won by a little girl of seven years of age, to whom a gentleman gave his chance. She was the daughter of a poor widow woman, whose husband, a non-commissioned officer, had been killed in action. The poor woman was so overcome by this unexpected good fortune that she burst into tears. Her passage had been paid in Calcutta by some kind-hearted persons, but on landing all that she would have possessed would have been insufficient to carry her from Southampton to her home in the Highlands of Scotland.

To return to Mrs. Bink. She had been so covered with black dust at Ceylon, that she was determined to land at Aden, until the disagreeable operation of "coal-ing" was over. With one of her prettiest smiles, she communicated her intention to me, and asked me if I would mind getting a boat, to take herself, the children, and the ayah on shore? And would I have any objection to accompany her? When I contemplated her pretty face, and looked into her lovely hazel eyes, I might with truth have said to her, in the words of Othello, "I will deny thee nothing."

A boat was hailed. I saw my "charge"—Mrs. Bink and family—into it, and followed them. Whilst rowing to the jetty, I congratulated myself that I should have a

quiet day with her at the hotel (the only one at Aden), for I premeditated sending the ayah with Alfred and Georgina to look for shells, or witness the donkey races from the verandah. But in this I was disappointed. Mrs. Bink wanted to know the number of the regiment, a wing of which was quartered at Aden, and the moment I informed her, she exclaimed, "Why, that's Edward Tyne's regiment!"

"Who is Edward Tyne?" I inquired.

"My first cousin," replied Mrs. Bink. "I wonder if he is here? I would give the world to see him! Do ask some one."

I asked the parsee who kept that miserable hotel; but he simply shook his head, and replied, "Me know not any gentlemens of that name, sahib." Mrs. Bink, however, was certain her cousin was there, in the cantonment. She had, she said, a presentiment to that effect: would I mind riding up to ascertain?

I hinted that the day was rather warm, that the cantonment was some miles distant, and that out of the influence of the sea breeze the heat would be unbearable. Mrs. Bink then said if I would promise to take care of the children during her absence, she would hire a pony and go herself. I represented that this would be madness; that the chances were she would have a *coup de soleil*. But in reply to this, she remarked that, if I were a lady and she a gentleman, I should not have to ask her twice to do anything; and withdrawing from her pocket a lace-edged kerchief, she rose from the sofa on which she was sitting, and walked into the verandah. I followed,

and began to reason with her ; but, unfortunately, the old lieutenant passed by, and Mrs. Bink called to him, and asked him if there was not a Captain Tyne in Aden.

"Tyne? Tyne?" said the lieutenant, "let me see!" While he was pondering, and not knowing what reply to give—for he was a very cautious as well as a crafty old man—Mrs. Bink said: "He is a cousin of mine, and I am certain he is here, though Mr. York thinks otherwise."

"How do you spell his name?" said the lieutenant.

Mrs. Bink told him, whereupon he suddenly called out, "Oh, yes, of course there is! T-Y-N-E. Why, there are several letters for him. I have just sorted them."

"I told you so!" said Mrs. Bink, turning to me. "And I *must* see him. If he only knew that I was here, he would gallop down immediately."

What was I to do? Go, of course, in search of Captain Tyne—not that I believed one word of what the lieutenant said, although when he came into the apartments I had hired, sat down, and drank some of the wine I had ordered, he repeated, most emphatically, that Tyne was in cantonment, and recommended me to lose no time, as we should leave the port at half-past five.

Away I went, mounted on an Arab pony, which required from me as much cudgelling as a Ramsgate donkey, albeit he flew like an arrow at the touch of his naked owner's heel. A more fatiguing journey I never experienced. At times I fancied I should fall from the animal's back. So intense was the glare of the sunshine,

that every object seemed red, green, and yellow, while the grey dust of the road, formed of those volcanic rocks, nearly choked me. It was just as I expected. Tyne was with the other wing. The officer of whom I inquired, said he was not quite sure that Captain Tyne had not sent in his papers to sell out of the army. When I returned, utterly exhausted, at half-past two o'clock, I found the lieutenant and Mrs. Bink at dinner, or rather they had just finished that meal.

"What a time you have been!" said Mrs. Bink. "Did you find him?"

"No," I replied. "He is not at Aden."

"Oh, he must be?" said the lieutenant. "I'll swear it! What a time he has been, Mrs. Bink, did you say? I should think he *had*. Let me see—from half-past ten till half-past two—four hours! Egad, I'd have ridden on a mule—four times six are twenty-four—four and twenty miles, sir. Well, now you have come back, and I can safely leave Mrs. Bink, I must go and attend to my work, which I have been neglecting. If the Admiralty only knew that before the shrine of Beauty and of Pleasure I have been smashing the Idol of Duty, I should be superseded as sure as I have a head on my shoulders." Here he refilled his glass from the bottle, which was nearly empty, and, drinking off the contents at one gulp, he took his departure.

My head ached very severely, and altogether I felt ill. I had brought a bottle of eau-de-Cologne on shore with me, but Georgina, during my absence, had poured the whole of it over the ayah's clothes. There was not a



single drop remaining. Observing that I looked very pale, Mrs. Bink suggested that we should return to the ship—a suggestion that I was only too glad to act upon. I, therefore, went out and paid the bill, a copy of which is as follows :—Breakfasts, 10 rupees ; sherry and biscuits, 10 rupees ; pony hire, 5 rupees ; dinner for ayah, 1 rupee ; ditto for children, 2 rupees ; breakfast for children, 1 rupee 8 ; bottle of ale, 1 rupee 8 ; 1 tumbler, 2 wine glasses, and 1 basin, broke by children, 5 rupees ; total, 36 rupees, or three pounds twelve shillings, English money. When we got on board, I was obliged to go to my cabin. After my difference with the doctor, I did not like to send for him, and therefore prescribed for myself—a little brandy and some iced water. Having drank this, I fell asleep, just as the steamer was weighing anchor. At six o'clock I was awakened by a rapping at the cabin door. It was the ayah, who had been sent by her mistress to inquire if I had seen her keys. I said, "No." The ayah returned in a few minutes, and told me that the keys were on the table at the hotel, and that the mem sahib asked me to put them in my pocket, and that I must have done so. I got up, searched my pockets in a state of semi-stupefaction, and informed the ayah that I could not find them, and did not remember anything connected with them. For a third time the ayah came to my cabin door, and told me a long story ; but I was far too feeble to make any reply, or to hear with distinctness what she said. I fell asleep again, and did not awake till a quarter to ten. I made an effort, sprang up, and went upon the deck. The first person I encountered was the old lieutenant.

"Halloa, York!" he cried out, "you are in for it. What about the lady's keys?"

"I know nothing about them," I replied.

"But *I* do, and if you will promise me not to say anything I'll tell you."

Well, what is it?"

"When we were at dinner, I saw Alfred take them up, and throw them out of the window at one of the Arab boys."

"Then why did you not tell Mrs. Bink?"

"You don't suppose I was fool enough for that? As the ayah had the baby, I should have had to go out and find them, and by the time I came back the chicken would have been cold, and the boy howling because of the scolding his mother would have given him. Talking of the chicken, I relished it amazingly. A dine on shore, in my opinion, is worth ten dinners on board of a ship. By the way, what a pleasant, chatty little woman Mrs. Bink is, when she is all alone with me. By Jove! sir, until to-day I had not the slightest idea what a merry little heart a jovial conversation inspires within her. She is only five-and-twenty, she tells me—weighs exactly eight stone seven—and measures only five feet three and three-quarters. I thought she was taller, till she stood against the wall, and I sent for a foot rule and took her height to a hair. She was quite right. Five feet three and three-quarters—and, '*no tip-toeing*'—as I told her at the time. By the way, you had not left us more than ten minutes before I found out that I had made a mistake about the name. It was Clive, not Tyne, to whom those

letters were addressed. I thought of sending a fellow to call you back ; but as I was afraid he would not overtake you, I did *not* do so."

Although I was somewhat refreshed by the languid breeze that cooled my brow, I was in no humour to talk. Not that I think the old lieutenant wished me to do so—he was in such a very talkative and light-hearted humour himself.

"You must have had a blazing hot ride of it," he resumed ; "for when you came back you looked like an over-heated penguin. When I was in command of the 'Jasper,' and we were at Madeira——"

So long as Mrs. Bink was the theme of his discourse, I listened to him with something akin to patience ; but when he began to talk of the "Jasper," I could stand it no longer ; so I said, "Good night, Bloomfield ; I really must go to bed ;" and resought my cabin, where I said to myself—"Well, I hope, sir, you are now satisfied ? Have you had enough ?" To both of these questions, while looking at my pallid face in the glass, I responded, "Certainly. It is all over now ! The dream has passed away ! The illusion is gone for ever ! Five feet three and three quarters, by Bloomfield's measurement ; and weighs exactly eight stone. Hah ! hah !! hah !!!" And grinning like a maniac I closed my eyes.

On the following morning I did not get up to breakfast, but took a little tea and toast in my own cabin. After that I sat down to write some letters to friends in India, with the intention of posting them at Suez. At a quarter to eleven, however, I was interrupted by a

knock at the door. It was the ayah. She brought me a note from Mrs. Bink :—

“ Dear Mr. York,—I am very sorry you gave Alfred those small brass buttons—for he has swallowed one of them ! I do not like to speak to the doctor myself after what has happened ; but will you kindly mention it to him, *immediately* ? I really believe I shall go out of my mind long before we reach England. I wish you had been at breakfast this morning. That odious Captain Bulke, taking advantage of your absence, and that of Lieutenant Bloomfield, came and sat next to me. I did all in my power to repulse him ; but he *would* enter into conversation. Do, dear Mr. York, let me see you as soon as you possibly can, and believe me, always truly and sincerely yours,

LAURA BINK.”

Where were my resolutions of the past night ? Bulke was a man whom I abhorred. He was, in my opinion, an ineffable snob. On two or three occasions, on a variety of pretexts, he had attempted to make himself on speaking terms with Mrs. Bink ; but knowing my dislike for the man, and thinking him “ a very vulgar creature ” herself, she had repulsed him with considerable tact and dignity. “ What ! ” I exclaimed, “ leave her to be persecuted by Bulke ? Never ! ” In another minute I was in the saloon, talking to Mrs. Bink. Her fright concerning Alfred was at an end. The urchin had spoken falsely when he said he had swallowed the button. It had been found. But then I had to listen to her grievance touching the intrusion of Captain Bulke, who had paid her, what she described to be, several “ very offensive compliments.” He had told her that her smiles would make a summer where darkness else ’twould be ; and had declared that her voice was the sweetest he had ever heard. Mrs. Bink was extremely indignant, and, as her

protector, so was I. In my anger I resolved on speaking to Captain Bulke, and informing him that his conduct had not been in accordance with the rules of good society, and the respect due to a lady of Mrs. Bink's position. Bulke, who had been very tipsy over-night, and who had been trying to sober himself all the morning by drinking brandy and soda-water, was disposed to be argumentative, and took issue on the word "position"—his being, as he alleged, as good as that of Mrs. Bink or myself. To this I was not prepared to assent, and I told Captain Bulke that the fact of holding a commission, did not make a man a gentleman, and that he, Captain Bulke, was the son of an ex-footman, a gambling-house keeper, who had been convicted of perjury. This was quite true: but Bulke denied it, and said if I repeated it he would knock me down. I *did* repeat it, and Bulke then said—"Stop till we get to Southampton. Where are you to be found in London? There's *my* card, sir!" I threw his card away, called him a drunken, contemptible hound, and walked aft to tell Mrs. Bink she was not likely to be annoyed any more by Captain Bulke. As usual, everybody thought I was in the wrong, and fancied Bulke an ill-used and bullied individual. It is quite true that I was big enough and strong enough to have laid Bulke prostrate with a single blow, even if the brandy and soda-water had had the effect upon him which he desired, instead of making him very unsteady on his legs. Some of the remarks of the passengers (both male and female), which I was compelled to overhear, put me into a tower-

ing passion ; but as they were not addressed *to* me, I could not very well, consistently with the demeanour of a gentleman, take any notice of them.

Lieutenant Bloomfield was not very well, and did not appear at the dinner table that day. I do not know what was the matter with him. Possibly in his attention to his duties on the previous night he had overtaxed his strength. I cannot say that I was sorry for his indisposition, as it gave me the satisfaction of sitting next to Mrs. Bink, and enjoying an agreeable *tête-à-tête* with her. Our conversation related chiefly to "that snob, Captain Bulke ;" but, albeit he did not overhear us, he had his revenge in the evening, when Mrs. Bink went to the piano, and accompanied me whilst I sang "*Believe me if all those endearing young charms.*" He kept up a loud but short cough all the while I was doing my best ; and when I was hanging on the last note, he vehemently applauded and drowned my voice. I could neither tear him limb from limb, nor throw him out of the stern windows ; but I gave him a look which I regret he did not see—for his fishy eyes were closed, and his drunken head resting on his vulgar chest. Bulke's aggravating conduct did not end here. He got up, staggered to a Mrs. Baliol, an intensely vulgar person, and asked her to sing a song. She complied—chiefly to annoy Mrs. Bink, who never spoke to her—and Bulke, with uneven steps, led her to the instrument, from which Mrs. Bink was compelled to rise. Mrs. Baliol called from her repertory the *Rat Catcher's Daughter*, which Bulke (when it was ended) declared to

be the style of thing for *his* money. All the passengers present laughed heartily—but neither Mrs. Bink nor myself joined in their merriment.

The next day passed over very happily. Alfred and Georgina were wonderfully good children. People who saw them sitting down together and looking amicably over their picture books, or playing with their toys, stared and marvelled. Baby also was less “fretty,” and reposed placidly in the ayah’s lap—so that I was enabled to walk, talk, play at chess with, and read to, Mrs. Bink, without any interruption whatsoever. The old lieutenant also was good enough to remain on the sick list, and thus I had the happiness of filling his vacant place by Mrs. Bink’s side. But in the evening there came woe. Mrs. Bink wanted me to do her a great favour. Would I take little Alfred to sleep in my cabin, which, being in the fore part of the vessel, was much cooler than the saloon cabins? The child could not bear the intense heat of the Red Sea in that confined and crowded space. “With all the pleasure in the world,” I replied; and so it was arranged that as soon as Alfred’s eyes were closed, the ayah was to remove him to my bed. There is not any room to spare in the berths, and had Alfred been a quiet child he would have been to me rather a bore; but as he was restless and naughty even in his sleep, he was an intolerable nuisance. He kicked me all the night through, and at daylight, when he awoke, I scarcely knew what animal to compare him to, unless it be a ferret, or the monkey in one of the happy family cages in the streets of London. He was all over my couch, like a piece of

quicksilver on a marble-topped table. One moment he was pinching my feet, and the next moment pulling my hair and whiskers, or tickling my ears and nostrils. Having had little or no sleep I was dying for a doze, but that was out of the question, for in addition to teasing me with his fingers, he put to me innumerable questions, all of which he insisted on my answering. He wanted to know how he got into my cabin? where was his mamma and Georgina? would I always let him sleep with me? what was o'clock? was it not time for breakfast? where were his clothes? would I give him his bath? &c., &c., &c. Oh! what a luxury when the ayah tapped at my cabin door, and my mercurial companion made his exit.

I was late for breakfast. Indeed the meal was nearly over before I sat down to the table. And to my disgust, the old lieutenant was now quite well, and in his place. In reply to a question he told me he had been suffering from a very severe attack of Hinkpang—a Chinese complaint; and on inquiring into the nature of it, he replied, with a smile, “I could not cough for sneezing.” He then detailed to Mrs. Bink the particulars of the first attack he had when in command of the “Jasper,” and that lady, believing every word he said, listened to him with the most profound attention. The old lieutenant was not a fabricator of the Captain Kearney or Captain G—— school (*vide* Marryatt's novels). His inventions were out of mere fun, and he did not expect the majority of his audience, but only the simple-minded, to credit his stories. He remarked to me that day, “I have not told



a good startling lie for some time, but I'll let one out at dinner. Just ask me—as soon as the cloth is removed, but not before, mind—if ever I heard a singing mouse?"

I complied with his request, at the time indicated, and he spoke as follows:—"When William the Fourth was Duke of Clarence, and a lieutenant in the navy, I was a midshipman, and sailed in the same ship with him. His Royal Highness took a great fancy to me, and when we were paid off at Plymouth, he said at parting—'Whenever you come to town, Bloomfield, give me a call, at my lodgings, in Duke Street, St. James's.' Well, one day I *did* call, and was received very graciously. Whilst we were talking and sipping our Madeira, I heard, in an adjoining room, what I thought was a lady's voice, singing some of the airs out of the 'Beggar's Opera.' 'That's very pretty,' said I. 'Very,' said the Duke, laughing. 'How charmingly she sings, to be sure,' said I. 'It does not happen to be a *she*,' said the Duke. 'What!' said I; 'do you mean to say that it is not the voice of a female?' 'I do,' said the Duke. 'What man in this world could sing like that?' I asked. 'But, it is not a man,' said the Duke. 'Then *what* is it?' said I. 'It is a mouse!' said the Duke; 'a male mouse!' I thought, of course, that he was joking, for he liked a bit of fun now and then, as well as you and I, York. But presently he satisfied me that he was in earnest. Opening the door which separated the rooms, he told me to follow him. I did so. In we went, and sure enough there was a mouse, in a large cage, made of solid gold wire, singing away as gaily as a lark. I was never so astonished in

the whole course of my life. If I had not seen it, I could not have believed it. The whole of *Polly's* songs did that mouse sing ; every word distinctly pronounced, and every note as perfect as could be. I asked the Duke where he got that mouse, and he told me that it was caught in the Haymarket Theatre. It seems that the mouse was so struck with Mrs. Jordan's singing, that whenever she went to rehearsal he would come out of his hole and listen, till at last he took to imitate her. On one occasion Mrs. Jordan was unable to attend rehearsal, but the company went on without her, omitting the part of Polly. The mouse, unable to understand this, and to control himself, leaves his hole, runs upon the stage, and strikes up, sir ! The manager had a trap baited with a small musical box, and into that trap went the mouse, and was caught. The manager, out of compliment to His Royal Highness, presented him with the little animal, cage and all. On his next voyage the Duke took the mouse to sea with him, and hung up the cage in his cabin. But the poor little thing did not live very long. It died on the South American station ; and the Duke, who assured me that as the sight of the empty cage almost maddened him, and as he was rather in want of money at the time, he parted with it to a Jew, at Bahia, for the worth of its mere weight in gold—£95. The wire was not heavy, but the frame-work was tolerably massive."

"Dear me !" exclaimed Mrs. Bink.

"What a wonderful thing !" said one of the ladies opposite.

"How very odd !" exclaimed the other

When the ladies left the table, the old lieutenant turned to me, and said, *sotto voce*, "That was a rattler—wasn't it? But they boused it in by the horns—just as we used to do the bullocks at Madagascar."

"Where did you hear that story about the mouse?" I asked him.

"Never heard it in my life! Made it, my boy, while I was dressing for dinner!" was his reply.

## CHAPTER V.

It was ten P.M. The ladies had retired. The lights were put out in the saloon. Alfred was asleep in my cabin, and I went on deck to smoke a cigar with the old lieutenant.

"I was talking to-day," he began, "about William the Fourth. Now I'll tell you something about him that is as true as the gospel. I was not in the ship with him, but I have it from an officer who was—an officer whose word I would believe just as soon as I would believe my own eyes and ears. When His Royal Highness was a lieutenant, he was once under the command of a Captain Page, in a frigate. Page was a very able and smart officer, and awfully particular about all matters connected with discipline. On one occasion, when the ship had just got into port, and dropped her anchors, which held her fast by the nose (I am not sure, but I think it was at Jamaica), His Royal Highness dressed himself in plain clothes, came on deck, and ordered a boat to be manned, to take him on shore. Captain Page, who happened to be on the quarter-deck, walked up to His Royal Highness, and said, 'Lieutenant Guelph, I have received no application on your part for leave to go on shore. You have neither verbally, nor in writing, asked my permission.

And I have yet to learn, Lieutenant Guelph, upon what authority (for you have not my sanction) you order one of the King's boats to be manned for your private purposes.' His Royal Highness, thus reproved and delayed, became exceedingly angry. But touching his hat, respectfully, he returned to his cabin, took off his plain clothes, put on his uniform, came on deck, and walking up to Captain Page, said, 'I desire leave, sir, for twenty hours, to go on shore.' 'By all means, Lieutenant Guelph,' said Page. 'And now, sir,' said His Royal Highness, 'I expect that all the honours due to my rank, as a Prince of the Blood Royal, will be accorded to me.' 'Of course,' replied Page, 'you shall have your right, most certainly ;' and he gave the order for the yards to be manned, and a royal salute fired the moment Lieutenant Guelph left the ship's side. This was done. Now the consequence was, that as soon as His Royal Highness landed, he was surrounded by all the leading people, as well as the rabble. The former came bowing and scraping, and the latter hoorayed, like mad, sir. This was what His Royal Highness hated, of all things in the world. What he liked was, to slip on shore quietly, without any fuss, and without anybody knowing or caring who he was, have his little innocent amusement, whatever it might be, and come on board again, to do his duty. Up he walked to the principal hotel, when he was pestered to death by invitations from the governor and all the magnates of the island, while the mob outside kept on thickening—every one of his father's loyal subjects, black and white, being most anxious to have a look at him. He was 'pinned' for a dinner, a ball, a supper, and on

the next morning, a breakfast, and afterwards a luncheon ; and right glad, no doubt, was he when it was time to get back to the ship. He was coming off quietly in a shore-boat—sitting in the stern sheets, steering. But Page was on the look-out for His Royal Highness, and as soon as he saw him, gave the order to man the yards and fire a royal salute. When he came on board, and reported himself to Page, he was very angry, but said nothing, and went below. A few days afterwards, he asked for leave, which was granted, and just as he was going over the side—this time in ‘mufti’—Page again gave the order to man the yards, &c. ‘Thank you, Captain Page, I do not require it,’ said His Royal Highness. Page, however, only bowed and smiled ; and as he did not countermand the order, it was carried out. Again was His Royal Highness pestered almost to death, and surrounded by the populace. Again was he let in for parties given in his honour, and had to make, or try to make, speeches on the various occasions when his health was drank. The people on the island thought that it might be a long time before a Prince of the Blood Royal of England landed there again ; and the best thing they could do was to make the most of him. Once more he took a shore-boat, and tried to come on board quietly, but Page was too many for him on that tack. ‘Man the yards, and fire a salute,’ was the order of the day. Now, Jack Tar does not mind a little of this sort of thing ; he likes it rather. But give him too much of it, and he grumbles like a bear with a sore head ; and fond as the men had been of His Royal Highness, up to the time of this work, they now wished him

anywhere, except on board the ship. Well, sir, to cut my story short, His Royal Highness gave in, and seeking an interview with Captain Page in his cabin, he begged, as a particular favour, that the royal salutes and manning of the yards might cease. Page, who thought that he had been punished sufficiently, acceded to his request, and they became as good friends as ever. For upwards of twenty years Page never saw the Duke of Clarence, after parting with him when the ship was paid off. But when His Royal Highness came to the throne, the old captain, then an admiral, attended a *levée*. The moment the King saw him, he became oblivious to the dignity of his position, and shouted out, ‘Halloa, Page! I am glad to see you! Do you remember those royal salutes?’ The officer who told me that anecdote, and I know it to be perfectly true, told me, also, that one day the Duke of Clarence, as a lieutenant, was speaking his mind very freely to a warrant officer, who had been neglectful of his duty. The man began to Royal Highness him, whereupon he called out, ‘None of that, sir! None of that! On shore you may do it as much as you please, but on board this ship, I give you distinctly to understand, that *I am Lieutenant Guelph!*’ Now this young Prince Alfred——”

Here the quarter-master, who was on duty on the main deck, whereon my cabin was situated, ran up and said to me, “If you please, sir, that little boy is shouting out for his mamma at the top of his voice.” I at once went down, and by the light of the quarter-master’s lantern, saw Alfred standing up, on my bed, in an agony of terror. Poor boy! he had had a horrid dream, and was

screaming, "Take me to mamma! Where is mamma!" It was past one o'clock before I could quiet him, and even this feat was performed amidst maledictions from passengers in the neighbouring cabins. Bulke, whose cabin was immediately opposite, kept on roaring out, even after Alfred had dropped off, "Will *nobody* strangle that little wretch?" About eight o'clock A.M., when the cabin doors are all open, the main deck resembles a street in miniature. There are very seldom, or never, *ladies* in that quarter. At this hour the conversation becomes general amongst the passengers, who appear at their respective doors in dressing-gowns and slippers, preparatory to taking a bath. What was I not compelled to hear on that morning which followed Alfred's making such a noise? Bulke led off by asking Blossop, whose cabin was ten yards distant, what on earth induced him to introduce a howling little brat into the vicinity at night, to disturb everybody who wanted to sleep? Blossop, who was obliged to speak loud, in reply, said he hoped nobody thought that *he* was either such a fool or so inconsiderate. Bulke then demanded, "*Who was it?* Let him stand forth, and say what he means! Was it you, Jameson?" (Jameson was a lieutenant in the Madras Army.) "*I?*" replied Jameson. "Do you suppose I am mad? The man who did such a thing deserves to be clobbered." "Clobbered!" growled the old liverless colonel; "he ought to be served worse than that. He ought to be flogged, and put into solitary confinement. When I went to take my cabin, I selected this simply because all the berths around me were already taken by unmarried men



without children. I shall have an investigation after breakfast, in the saloon, for I mean to lodge a formal complaint."

"So shall I," said Bulke, Blossop, Jameson, and several others, who had lost the best part of their night's rest.

"Then I had better draw it up," said the colonel, "and you can all sign it."

"Agreed!" said the aggrieved parties.

I thought that this was a mere threat—simply badinage. But it was otherwise. At about eleven o'clock, while I was sitting under the awning, near Mrs. Bink, and reading to her, the chief officer came up, and said he wished to speak to me. I arose, and retired with him to the gangway, when he informed me that several charges had been preferred against me, and that the captain and seventeen of the passengers were in the after-part of the saloon, ready to investigate them. Would I be present and defend myself? "You had better do so," suggested my quondam friend. Acting on his advice, I entered the saloon, and saw the captain seated at the head of one of the long tables, and the seventeen passengers on either side of him. There was a vacant chair in the centre of the table, on the left-hand side, and in this I was asked to be seated. The scene reminded me of a general court-martial, for all the military men (fourteen in number) were in uniform. The old colonel acted as prosecutor, and Captain Bulke as deputy judge-advocate-general. There were no ladies in the saloon, but I saw several looking through the Venetians, and heard them tittering. [Take notice, all ye young men, for whose especial benefit

I record my troubles, that if you devote yourself to one lady on board of a ship, all the others will dislike, if not hate, you.]

The "charges" upon which I was arraigned were read out by Captain Bulke, and were as follows :—

1st. That he, the said Lieutenant Charles Staunton York, of H.M.'s — Regiment of Foot, did, on the night of the 6th instant, take into his cabin (No. 129) a little boy, named Alfred Halliday Bink, he, the said Lieutenant Charles Staunton York, well knowing the wakeful and troublesome disposition of the said little boy, with the intent to disturb all the passengers and officers of the ship in the vicinity of cabin No. 129—such being contrary to the rules of good society, and unworthy the position of an officer in Her Majesty's service.

2nd. With having, when the said little boy, mentioned in the first charge, had awakened from their slumbers all the passengers and officers of the ship whose cabins were in the vicinity of cabin No. 129, used no effort to soothe, solace, or quiet the said little boy; but, on the contrary thereof, permitted the said little boy to scream until three bells in the middle watch—such being contrary, &c., &c.

"You have heard the charges, sir," said the captain to me. "What do you say in respect of them?"

"Not guilty," I replied.

"Then we must take the evidence," said the captain.

[The general reader is requested to understand that *all* complaints made to the captain against the improper

conduct of any passenger, male or female, are, in most cases, investigated in the manner here described.]

The old colonel gave his evidence in the most offensive manner imaginable, and in cross-examination I was resolved to be even with him. The following were the queries, and the replies :—

“This is not the first time, Colonel Scratchem, that you have complained of me?”

“It is not.”

“What was the first complaint?”

“That you suffered the boy, Alfred Bink, and his sister, to come into my cabin, and capsize my shaving water into my boots.”

“Did you say nothing about your wig?”

“Wig, sir?” (The old colonel laboured under the delusion that no one suspected that his black hair was false.)

“Yes, wig.”

“I decline to answer that question.” (Laughter from the ladies’ cabins, in which the majority of the court was compelled to join.)

“Do you, or do you not, wear a wig? On your word and honour as an officer and gentleman, did those jetty locks grow on your own head?” (Renewed laughter from the ladies and the members of the court.) Bulke laughed so heartily, and seemed to enjoy the joke so much, I forgave him all his past offensive conduct—especially as he said to the colonel, “I think, sir, you must answer the prisoner’s question.” At the word “prisoner”

he appeared to be choking. I, of course, looked as gravely as possible.

"What is the question?" said the colonel.

I repeated it.

"Yes!" was the reply. "It is not a wig. The hair is my own." (Loud laughter from the ladies' cabins, and shouts from every member of the court.) Bulke threw down his pen, for he could not write down the colonel's reply, and placing his head on the table, his whole body seemed violently convulsed. I, too, was forced to laugh at the idea of the old colonel's vanity so getting the better of him that it prompted him, on his word and honour as a gentleman, to state that which was so palpably untrue.

Lieutenant Bloomfield, who was a member of the court, and sat opposite, suggested that to clear the matter up Lieutenant Jameson, who sat next to the colonel, should be allowed to have a pull at the hair; and Lieutenant Jameson, having coincided in that opinion, made a movement of his hand towards the colonel's head, whereupon the old officer sprang up and roared out:—"If you dare to put a finger upon me, sir, I will place you under an arrest!" (Roars of laughter.)

The other witnesses were then examined. Unlike the colonel, they did not say I *purposely* annoyed them. They merely stated the facts, and the case for the prosecution having closed, the question was now debated, in all seriousness. I admitted having taken the child into my cabin, on the night stated, and on the previous night; and I further informed the court that it was my intention to do the same whenever I thought proper, and certainly

so long as we were in the Red Sea, and the heat was so intense. The question then arose as to my *right* to do so, the child being voted, by all concerned, an intolerable nuisance. To dot down all the various arguments, *pro* and *con*, would occupy too great a space—notwithstanding many of them were very amusing. Lieutenant Bloomfield, who was in my favour, put the following case. “Supposing,” he said, “I was the occupier of cabin 129, and paid one hundred and twenty-five pounds for its use during the passage to England, and suppose at midnight I took it into my head to imitate the Calcutta jackalls, or a lot of cats on the tiles? Do you mean to tell me that any captain or officers of any Peninsular and Oriental Company’s ship, in any part of the world, should stop me. Not a bit of it. The very thing once happened on board the ‘Jasper,’ when I commanded her. A rascally young midshipman used to repeat poetry aloud to himself, all through his middle watch below. He was in love—poor devil! This was reported to me by his messmates, who could get no rest. I told him he must not spout poetry. But he would. I placed him under an arrest, and had him confined to a cabin for six weeks, till we got to port, intending to have him tried by a court-martial; but, by Jove, the admiral told me to release the lad immediately, and hinted that if the Admiralty came to hear of it, it would be all cock-a-hoop with my commission.” To this Bulke replied: “Well, if it is decided that that little boy is to howl in 129, I will set my three big musical boxes going, all at the same time, and keep them wound up till daylight does appear. And

if anybody gets a wink of sleep till those boxes are stopped, all I can say is, they are welcome to it."

Eventually the case was decided in favour of my *right*; and of this the captain informed the passengers. As may be supposed, this decision did not decrease my unpopularity. Mrs. Bink was in ecstasies at my victory, and at the time I was silly enough to imagine her joy was on *my* account. That night, Alfred, at eight bells had another horrid dream, and began to roar; and, true to his word, Bulke set his three musical boxes going. Simultaneously was every cabin door opened, and the words, "For God's sake!" uttered in every possible variation of tone—expressive of anger or expostulation. Lieutenant Jameson also contributed to the discordant harmony of the night, by taking the hint from Lieutenant Bloomfield, and imitating, alternately, the Calcutta jackall and the British tom cat. This latter performance frightened Alfred so much, that it was useless attempting to quiet him. "Mamma! mamma, dear!" he screamed for upwards of two hours and a half, when, utterly exhausted, he sobbed himself to repose. What an awful night was that, to be sure! But strange to say, the next morning made Alfred the most popular child on board the vessel, especially with Bulke, Blossop, Jameson, and others, whom he had so much disturbed and annoyed. How it happened was this; when the ayah came at half-past seven o'clock to take Alfred, the boy was still asleep, and I would not have him disturbed; and taking advantage of the position, I went to have my bath. On my return I found him in the arms of Captain Bulke, who was affectionately hugging

him to his chest, and calling him a "dear little brick"—while several of the other passengers in "our street" were petting the child, and laughing immoderately. It seemed that Alfred, during my absence of twenty minutes, had awakened, gone out of my cabin, and once more got into the old colonel's, whence he abstracted *the* wig. This act of the child's, in connection with the past day's proceedings, so tickled the beholders, that when he came out, wig in hand, they received the little imp with the most rapturous acclamation. The wig was sent to the lost property basket, which stood under the large looking-glass, on the sideboard in the saloon. All sorts of things were to be seen in that basket. Handkerchiefs, smelling-bottles, penknives, pencil cases, scissors, books, fans, &c., &c., &c.—but seldom, or never before, a black wig, ticketed, "Found on the main deck." So much fun did this capillary waif create that morning, every soul on board would have been reconciled to Mrs. Bink, myself, and her children, had she not been so reserved, haughty, and obstinate. She could not see anything to laugh at, she said, and was extremely displeased whenever I chuckled. The colonel did not appear at breakfast or dinner; but in the evening he sent for the captain, and lodged another complaint against *me*—not that he intended, he said, to have it investigated on board, as he had made up his mind to give me in charge of a policeman, for robbery on the high seas, the very moment we landed on British soil. The captain told him that the wig could not have been stolen, and that it was "found" on the main deck, and it should be brought to his cabin. The colonel (who did not admit the captain to his apart-

ment, but spoke to him from behind the door) remarked that he had said nothing about a wig, but had merely stated that he had been robbed, and Lieutenant York was the thief. As for any wig that might be brought to his cabin, he declared that he would not receive it. The captain said "Very well," and as no one came forward to claim the wig, there it remained, in the lost property basket. For two days the colonel did not come to meals; but, on the third day, he came to dinner in another wig—the identical wig which Georgina had mutilated with the nail scissors.

Alfred continued to roar, almost every night; but such was the *éclat* he had gained by the wig business, and as the passengers were getting used to the noise, it was not noticed. Apart from this roaring, I led for a few days a comparatively easy life, but Mrs. Bink became possessed of a fear which caused me very serious inconvenience. One of the children in the adjoining cabin, in consequence of the severe heat, was covered with a rash. Mrs. Bink was convinced that it was the measles or the small pox, and she asked me to allow the ayah, with all three of her children, to sleep in my cabin, observing that I "could, no doubt, get a berth in some friend's cabin!" Friend? There was not a man in the ship from whom I was entitled to ask the slightest favour, except Lieutenant Bloomfield, and he was not a very likely "party" to allow his personal comfort to be in the slightest degree interfered with. So great were her fears, however, that I was obliged to humour them, and grant her request. Arrangements were made accordingly, and when the hour



for turning in arrived, I spread my cloak upon a hen-coop, and laid myself down thereon. Now, be it known, that sleeping in the open air in the Red Sea is very dangerous. Heavy dews descend ; and the consequence of my imprudence was, that I had a severe attack of rheumatism, and until we arrived at Suez, limped about the deck in great agony.

On the morning that we were about to leave the vessel, cross the desert, and proceed to Alexandria to meet the other steamer, Mrs. Bink reminded me of my promise (not to give any of the stewards a gratuity), and requested me to repeat it. I did so ; but in this I slyly broke faith with her, and gave the man who had attended upon me the usual fee—one sovereign. On going into the old lieutenant's cabin, to speak to him about the washing, which was to be completed in three quarters of an hour, he laughed in my face, and said, "What stuff! she will get no washing done at Suez—not so much as a pocket handkerchief or a towel. Let her pack all up. I shall not go on shore until you are all off in the vans, and the other batch of passengers from England have arrived at the hotel. That is a rule of mine which I never break through. Bid Mrs. Bink good bye for me ; for I hate taking farewell of a lady."

"And what about the van which she was to have all to herself and the children?" I asked him.

Again he laughed in my face, and then said,

"What! didn't you form your party and draw lots for the number of the van, like the other passengers?"

"No," I replied. "Mrs. Bink was so certain that

you would see to it, that she declined drawing lots, and as I had arranged to go in the same van *with* her, I thought it would be all right."

The old lieutenant gave a shrill whistle, and remarked, "Well, you will all go together certainly, but it will be in the last van of the last batch. There'll be you and Mrs. Bink, and the ayah and the three children. The two elder ones you can take on either side of you, the ayah with the baby will sit in one corner, and Mrs. Bink in the other, where she will be able to sleep. You will be as snug as possible, though I don't envy you the clouds of dust you will have to pass through, being the last van, you see." This was a nice prospect, verily! Landed at Suez, we had the mortification to see the first batch of vans depart, while we had to remain for four hours in that wretched, dismal place, tormented by swarms of flies, and where the water was scarcely drinkable. At length we were off. What I endured that night I would defy the most graphic writer of the day to depict. I had warned Mrs. Bink that she ought to take an abundance of shawls and cloaks with her; for as soon as it becomes dark in the desert—hot as the days are—it is often very cold. She could not credit this, and paid no heed to my advice. Beyond her own shawl and two little jackets for the children, she had made no sort of provision. The consequence was, that about nine o'clock, she was nearly frozen, while the children were so cold they shuddered fearfully and cried. The poor ayah, who was very lightly clad, moaned awfully, and two or three times declared she should die. I gave her my overcoat, and made her put it

on. Georgina and Alfred I enveloped in a railway wrapper I had with me, and to Mrs. Bink I lent a knitted worsted comforter to tie round her neck. I also lent her a pair of buckskin gloves to put over her kid ones and keep her fingers warm, and an extra coat, which I had in my carpet bag, I wrapped round her little feet. If I could have smoked and drank a glass of brandy and water occasionally, I should not have minded. But Mrs. Bink (whose husband did not smoke) hated the smell of tobacco or of ardent spirits. Either made her "feel quite faint," she used to say. There is one thing I must give Mrs. Bink credit for. If her repugnance to brandy and water and smoking did not entirely cure me of those "vices," it at all events considerably abated my indulgence in them.

Cairo! Grand Cairo! How glad was I when we had arrived at Shepherd's magnificent hotel, though all the best bedrooms were engaged, and Mrs. Bink had to put up with an inferior one, at the very top of that tall house. I had seen Cairo before, but had not seen the Mosque in a state of completion, and I longed very much to do so. But it could not be managed. The ayah was ill, and Mrs. Bink had an attack of *tic-douloureux*; so that, in addition to "minding" Alfred and Georgina, baby was almost constantly in my arms. Thank heaven, we had not to go down the Nile in those horrid little steam-boats packed like so many sheep in a pen, but could reach Alexandria by railway. What I suffered when I came up the Nile alone was bad enough; but what it would have been with those three children on my hands, I shudder at the bare idea of it.

The steamer from England had met with some accident

after leaving Malta, and was fifty hours behind her time. We therefore met the passengers by her at Alexandria. Amongst them was one Jack Williams, a captain in my regiment. Seeing me with baby in my arms, he exclaimed, "What, York! have you gone and married?" And on my informing him that the child was that of a wife of our friend Bink, he gave me a prod in the ribs with his forefinger which deprived me of breath for a quarter of a minute. Had I been alone, how I should have enjoyed an hour's talk with him, over a dish of cutlets and a bottle of champagne! As it was, I had barely time to speak to him; for the ayah, who was now a little better, was bringing me messages, every five minutes, from Mrs. Bink, whose *tic-douloureux* had seemingly become chronic.

From Alexandria—the weather being now much cooler—I had my cabin to myself, and was comfortable at night, though in the daytime I rarely had a moment's rest. Baby had grown so fond of me, that whenever she saw me she cried to come to me, and as Mrs. Bink used to say, "Well, go to him, darling," I was obliged to take the child. The fact was, that, notwithstanding all I had gone through, I was still infatuated with Mrs. Bink, and was the perfect slave of her wishes. She could be the most engaging little woman in the world, and with one of her smiles win the heart of any sensitive man (like myself) in existence.

I bought a Bournouse (Egyptian cloak for ladies) at Alexandria, which I intended as a present to my unmarried sister. I, imprudently, showed it to Mrs. Bink, and asked her what she thought of it. She thought it

"superb," and then expressed her regret that I had not told her such things were to be purchased. I reminded her that she was suffering from tic-douloureux, and did not leave her room. "Very true," she conceded, "but, dear me! I would have given any price for a thing like this! What did it cost?" "Nine pounds," I replied. "Ah, *do* let me have it!" she implored. "Very well," I said.

At Malta, Mrs. Bink wished to make some purchases—lace, corals, silver bracelets, filagree work, charms, &c., &c. But her husband had calculated with too great a nicety the ready coin she would require on the passage, and she was left with only three sovereigns. She had, of course, bills on his agents for hundreds of pounds, payable at sight, but these were not negotiable on board ship, or even at Malta, for no one there knew anything of Bink, or of his means. Mrs. Bink seemed amazed when I delicately hinted as much to her. She fancied that the whole world had judicial and other cognizance of such a place as India, and, therefore, that every body must know that her husband—Edward Chicoley Edmonstone Colebrooke Crushington Bink—was the civil and sessions judge of Humdrumabad, in the Upper Provinces of the Bengal Presidency. I had in my purse two ten pound notes, two five pound notes, twelve sovereigns, and some silver. The reader must not think that I am a wealthy man. I have nothing in the world but my pay; and the above amount was all that I possessed in the world after paying for my sister's Bour-nouse. This I placed at Mrs. Bink's disposal. She thanked me, took twenty pounds in notes, and five sovereigns, laid in her stock of admirably selected trinkets, and very kindly

guided me in a selection of articles for my mother. Mrs. Bink spent eighteen pounds and I ten pounds. What a happy evening was that! And (heaven forgive me!) what would I not have given could I have received authentic information of Bink's death—so sure was I that "dear Laura" would have accepted the offer of marriage I should have made her. She had seemed, since we left Alexandria, so fond of me, and looked at me so tenderly, that had she been a widow with *six* children instead of three, I would have gone down upon my knees and have sworn to be unto her a loving husband, and a most affectionate step-father to her little offspring.

At Gibraltar Mrs. Bink also purchased, from the dealers who came off to the ship, a variety of articles—fancy slippers, necklaces, &c., &c.; and I, too, laid out a couple of pounds. Making purchases is "catching." I have seen dozens of passengers on the deck of a ship say, angrily, "No!" when asked by a jeweller to buy something; and every one of them, unasked, subsequently would make a purchase, simply because they had seen some lady or gentleman set the example. I have observed a dealer with a large tray covered with ornaments stand a full hour on the deck, and not sell a single thing, and in the space of ten minutes dispose of *all* his wares, after the ice had been broken by one person. We were now drawing near our journey's end. And, in truth, I was sorry for it. Completely broken in to the discharge of the duties of a male parent—in homely parlance, I "did not mind it at all." And I could have wished the passage to last for another six weeks at the very least. But alas, to

the exact time that the captain reckoned—four P.M. on Tuesday—we were alongside the landing place at Southampton! Never did I feel so wretched as when I saw the passengers hurrying on shore. I, of course, stayed to do all for Mrs. Bink that she required, with respect to clearing her luggage, ascertaining all about the departure of the trains, and securing apartments for the night, if necessary, at the Dolphin Hotel. Mrs. Bink was in the saloon, and so was I, the ayah, and the children, waiting for the crowd to depart, when there came on board a tall, thin, knock-kneed, cadaverous looking man, of about five and thirty years of age, dressed all in black, except his neckcloth, or stiff-starched stock, which was as white as snow. In a deep, sepulchral measured, and rather croaking tone of voice, he inquired for Mrs. Bink, in our hearing. One of the stewards pointed the lady out to him. With slow and measured steps, as though he were pacing the aisle of a cathedral, on his way to the reading desk, he approached, and with a stiff bow, he said, “Madam, I have the honour to claim you as my sister-in-law. I am the Reverend Constantine Bink, curate of St. Barnacles, in the parish of——”

“Edward’s brother!” exclaimed Mrs. Bink, seizing by both hands the reverend gentleman, whom she had never seen before. “Oh, dear! how fortunate I am, to be sure!” Then, turning to me, she said, as light-heartedly and hurriedly as possible, “Mr. York, I am very much obliged to you, but as my brother has come to meet me, I will not trouble you any further. Good-bye!” and giving me a nod, and a hasty shake of the hand, she retired to read a letter which the reverend gentleman had

brought, he said, from his mother. When she got to the door of her cabin, she turned round and called out, "Oh, Mr. York, will you kindly let me know what I owe you?"

"I will settle that," said the reverend gentleman, pulling out his purse, and looking at me (with an expression of face which seemed to say, "Now, don't cheat, my fine fellow, whoever you are"). "What is the amount, pray?"

"I lent Mrs. Bink on the voyage twenty-five pounds," I said, feeling so crushed, so humiliated, that I would rather she had forgotten the obligation, and I could have ran on shore to laugh and cry over my folly at the nearest hotel.

"Was it one sum, or in several sums?" said the Rev. Mr. Bink.

"In one sum—twenty pounds in notes, and five sovereigns."

"Oh!" He retired to Mrs. Bink's cabin door, spoke to her in a whisper, and presently returned, saying, "It is quite correct, I find. Will you be so good as to write me a receipt?" and he drew from his pocket-book a piece of paper bearing a stamp.

What were my feelings when I wrote, scribbled, dashed off these almost illegible words—"Received from the Rev. C. Bink twenty-five pounds, for money lent to Mrs. Bink at Malta. C. S. YORK, Lt., H.M.'s — Regt."

"You should have written 'Constantine' in full," said the reverend gentleman. "There's a Rev. C. Bink, an uncle of mine: but never mind that, as it cannot be altered without sacrificing the stamp. Date it, however. You have omitted to do so."



I dated it. The reverend gentleman then counted out the money (twice over) very slowly, and handed it to me with the air of a man who is conferring an obligation, and expects to be thanked profusely.

I bade the reverend gentleman "good afternoon," gave Alfred, Georgina, and the baby each a kiss, shook hands with the old ayah, who, observing the sorrowful expression of my features, and gleaning the cause, said, in Hindostani, "*Sahib, I am not ungrateful for all you have done for these children, on the black waters, and on land. May God protect you, and give you a happy meeting with your relations!*" These words touched me, and, to conceal my emotion, I hurried away.

There was a train about to start for London, and I took a ticket. On the platform I met Bulke, who offered me an apology, which I accepted, and we shook hands, and travelled together in the same carriage as far as the Waterloo Station. The last train was then about to start for Windsor, near to which town my family resides. I got to my home at two o'clock in the morning, and to my intense joy found my mother, sister, and sister-in-law (a widow) quite well, and looking not a day older than when I last parted with them, although eight years had elapsed since then. In their company my woes were at an end, and ere a week had passed I ceased to think of Mrs. Bink, albeit the figure and voice of the Reverend Constantine haunted me continually by day, and at night I dreamt of him; and to this very day I am afraid to eat a lobster, out of sheer dread of seeing in my sleep the Reverend Constantine in the shape of every animal in

the Zoological Gardens ; for he has several times appeared to me as a rhinoceros, a tiger, a wolf, an elephant, a giraffe, a hippopotamus, a boa constrictor, and an alligator. He is to me what the ghost of the murdered man was to Eugene Aram ;—and no wonder, since I saw him and spoke to him a second time, in his own proper person. How it happened was this. About a fortnight after my return, my sister exclaimed, on taking up the *Times* one morning after breakfast, “Why, Charles, this must be intended for you !” and then read as follows from the second column of the advertisement sheet :—

“If Lieutenant Charles S. York, of Her Majesty’s — Regiment of Foot, who returned from India recently, in the Peninsular and Oriental Company’s steam vessel ———, will apply at the Vicarage, Seamington, Huntingdonshire, he will hear of something greatly to his advantage.”

My mother, dear sanguine old lady, at once concluded that a large fortune was left to me. She always had laboured under the impression that there was wealth coming to the family from some quarter or another ; but when pressed for her reasons, was sadly deficient in any of a satisfactory character. Now, however, she triumphantly exclaimed, “It has come at last !” And I had no peace till I journeyed to Seamington. As for myself, I had always associated the words “greatly to his advantage,” with a writ, or an unpaid bill of some tradesman who did not know the address of his debtor.

On arriving at Seamington I made my way to the vicarage, and inquired if the vicar were within, and was answered in the negative. “But the curate is, sir,” added the maid-servant.

"Will you give him my card?" I said.

"Yes, sir," said the girl, and left me in the hall.

Presently there came out to me no other person than the Reverend Constantine Bink! He approached me with an extremely sanctimonious smile, and extending two long fingers and a thumb, which were as cold and clammy as the back of a live toad, he asked me to "come in." I followed him into a room which was very meagrely furnished, though the book shelves were plentifully stocked with religious works, handsomely bound, and lettered in gold.

"I advertised for you," began the Reverend Constantine Bink, "because I did not know your address—and I would not for the world that you should be a loser by any little act of kindness shown to a member of our family."

I made him a low bow.

"The act was *intended* as an act of kindness, no doubt," continued the reverend gentleman, "though others, myself for instance, might put upon it a very different interpretation. You purchased at Malta, the hot-bed of Romanism, a garment which no lady could wear amongst friends of a serious turn of mind—a sort of opera cloak, of lavender coloured cloth, trimmed with red velvet and gold tassels."

"Oh! the Bournouse!" I said. "It was at Alexandria, not at Malta."

"Are you sure that it was not at Malta? I understood my sister-in-law to say Malta."

"No; at Alexandria."

"Well, after all, the place does not signify. The question is—the garment. You resold it to Mrs. Edward Bink for nine pounds."

"I purchased the garment for my sister, and at the earnest solicitation of Mrs. Bink I suffered her to have it."

"It is all the same. There was a bargain and sale, conducted, I doubt not, on legal and equitable principles. Understand me, I do not believe you derived any pecuniary advantage by the transaction. On the contrary, I believe you, when you lead me to infer that you parted with the garment reluctantly. Now, my sister-in-law, who is at present staying with us, but who is too indisposed to see you, tells me that the garment remains unpaid for, that she never thought anything about it until she unpacked her trunks. I am, therefore, desirous of paying you the nine pounds, or giving you the option of taking the garment back—assuring you, at the same time, that my sister-in-law has never once worn it, and would not now *think* of doing so. For persons whose tastes lead them to attend balls, such a garment would be an invaluable possession ; but for a lady whose relations and friends regard such assemblies as ungodly, the case is very different."

I again bowed ; for I was far too much amused to stop him in his discourse, or rather his harangue.

"If," he went on to say, "you are disposed to take the garment back, at its original cost, you are at liberty to do so ; or if you think the detention of the garment by Mrs. Edward Bink for a period of, say one month, has caused any diminution in its value, I shall be happy, most

happy, to make you any reasonable deduction, and pay you the difference in *cash*."

"Well, sir," I said, struggling to keep down my inward laughter, and preserve a serious countenance, "I really think I *am* entitled to some deduction."

"Name the amount."

"Do you think thirty shillings would be too much?"

"Decidedly. Remember, the garment has not been worn, and as a present, in your sister's eyes, it would be quite as valuable as if it had never changed hands—especially if she is not aware of the facts. There is a great deal of truth in that old proverb—'What the eye seeth not, and the ear heareth not, the heart grieveth not.'"

"Very true, sir. I believe that the parent of that proverb was an old hospital nurse, from whose nasal organ dropped some snuff into the patient's beef tea, which she was tasting, until the accident happened."

The reverend gentleman was rather startled at the levity of this remark, but speedily returned to the point—the amount I was to receive in cash.

"Thirty shillings is too much," he said. "The sum ought to be decided on some fixed principle. Suppose we calculate the interest upon nine pounds for one month at—say ten per cent. That would make it, according to my reckoning, exactly fifteen shillings—half the amount you demand."

"But a pawnbroker's rate," I urged, "is *twenty* per cent. I know that, because on one occasion, as a youngster, at Chatham, I spouted my ticker to pay a tavern bill."

"I beg your pardon. I don't comprehend you."

"Pawned my watch. Now, at twenty per cent., thirty shillings must be the figure. However, if you think that rate of interest extortionate, let it be ten per cent., and give me the garment and the balance in cash."

"You shall have both," said the Reverend Constantine, rising and leaving the room.

In a few minutes he returned with the Bournouse, wrapped up in a large piece of brown paper. Having handed it to me, he opened a drawer in his writing table, and withdrew half a sovereign and two halfcrowns. Having looked several times at the coin, he placed it in my hands, and then he put to me the question, "Have you a receipt stamp?"

I said, "No."

"Then if you will give me a penny I will provide you with one. This, you know, is entirely a matter of business."

I happened to have a copper in my overcoat pocket, and I gave it to him. He then wrote out the following receipt, which I signed :—

"Received from the Reverend Constantine Bink, curate of St. Barnacles, in the parish of Seamington, the sum of fifteen shillings being the sum due to me by Mrs. Laura Bink, wife of Edward Chiceley Edmondstone Colebrooke Crushington Bink, Esq., of the Bengal Civil Service, for the use of a garment, or cloak, for which Mrs. Bink has no further occasion, and which I have received back from her."

"Write your name across the stamp," said the reverend gentleman.

I obeyed his mandate, and the business being concluded, I left him and made for the railway station,

laughing so heartily that every one whom I met must have thought me either insane or intoxicated. Let me do Mrs. Bink the justice to say I do not believe—nay, I am certain—she was not a party to the Reverend Constantine's meanness. I am satisfied she was as miserable in that vicarage as any woman could possibly be.

When I returned to my home, my mother seeing my face beaming with smiles, imagined that her brightest hopes were now fulfilled, and so did my sister and my sister-in-law.

"Is it land? An estate?" cried the former.

"No—personalty and money," I replied; and, withdrawing the Bournouse from the brown paper, I presented it to my sister, saying, "Here's a specimen! Look at it!"

"It is magnificent," they all exclaimed.

"Is it any one in trade that has made you his heir?" asked my mother.

"No," I replied.

"And what is the amount in money? Twenty thousand pounds?"

"Not so much as that; but I have the whole amount in my possession, and I will give it to you, on this condition—that you never part with it till your dying day, which I hope may be very far distant. The interest you may use if you like, but the principal must remain untouched."

"It shall, my son!"

"Then there!" I placed the fifteen shillings in her hand. She looked at it—"What do you mean, Charles?" she said, in astonishment.

"I cannot explain the matter to you now," I replied. "I am too tired. But after dinner this evening, you shall hear all."

"We have invited several old friends," said my sister.

"So much the better," I observed. "The more people who have to hear my story, the more shall I be pleased."

When the cloth was removed, I related, nearly word for word, to all present (eight in number), the narrative, of which the reader is already in possession. I was several times interrupted by peals of laughter, in which my dear mother and sister (much as they were disappointed), could not help joining. I concluded in these words: "I did *not* come in for a large fortune. It was all the other way. The trip to Seamington and back cost me a five pound note—to say nothing of leaving my overcoat and umbrella in the cab that brought me from the railway terminus to the Army and Navy Club!"

My sister, on the following day, transmitted to Mrs. Bink a post-office order for fifteen shillings, and explained to her that it was only in a spirit of jocularitv that I had received that amount from the Reverend Constantine Bink. To this letter no reply was received. Most probably the lady was ashamed of herself, and of her brother-in-law.

My leave will expire in December next, and I intend to rejoin my regiment, not that I like India, but as I am nearly at the top of the list of lieutenants, it would be madness for me to think of exchanging. It is my firm resolve to travel on Lieutenant Bloomfield's principles—except that I shall not take the trouble to make any



promises that I do not intend to perform. I shall be passively selfish, and have nothing whatever to say to ladies or children. Whenever I make this known my mother laughs and says, "Pooh, pooh, Charles! the same thing will happen again." I reply, "Never! I have made up my mind!" If, however, my mother's prediction should be verified, I will be candid enough to make the fact known—at the expense of being laughed at, and perhaps despised.

THE END.

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WARWICK HOUSE, PATERNOSTER ROW.

